Online and Offline Margins in China

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Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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Globalization, Language and Identity

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PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan Tilburg University
op gezag van de rector magnificus,
prof. dr. E.H.L. Aarts,
in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van een
door het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie
in de aula van de Universiteit

op vrijdag 22 december 2017 om 10.00 uur

door

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geboren te Enshi, People's Republic of China

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ISBN 978-94-6299-820-9

Cover photo by Xuan Wang
Cover design / layout / editing by Karin Berkhout, Department of Culture Studies, Tilburg University
Printed by Ridderprint BV, the Netherlands

To my loving parents

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my supervisors Sjaak Kroon and Ad Backus for all the faith they have placed in my potential to compose this book, and for the incredible patience and support they have so generously given to me during the process. It has been a journey of intense learning both in the scientific and intellectual arena and on the personal level, for which Jan Blommaert has been instrumental as my advisor. Through the research networks created by Babylon Centre for the Study of Superdiversity at Tilburg University, I have been lucky enough to meet with several other prominent figures in the field of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and globalization studies. Among them, I express my appreciation particularly to Gao Yihong, Marco Jacquemet, Adam Jaworski, the late Jens Normann Jørgensen, Gunther Kress, Sirpa Leppänen, Shahrzad Mahootian, Marilyn Martin-Jones, Rob Moore, Alastair Pennycook, Ben Rampton, Michael Silverstein, Jim Wilce, Li Wei and Zhu Hua, who have provided personal encouragement and food for thought at different stages of my journey, and whose works have been of fundamental importance in shaping my own research and thinking.

Over the past years, I have benefited from being immersed in a remarkably vibrant and productive research environment in the Department of Culture Studies, Tilburg University. The wealth of ideas, resources and energy generated here by a most creative and supportive team have stimulated me and enabled me to develop a breadth of interests and knowledge for treating the topics included in this book. I am grateful to my team, especially to colleagues with whom I have had fruitful collaborations in the form of either publication or conference and seminar, and this extends to a number of scholars affiliated elsewhere: Jos Swanenberg, Piia Varis, Max Spotti and Caixia Du in Tilburg, Kasper Juffermans and Constanze Weth in Luxembourg, Mike Baynham in Leeds, Luiz Paulo Moita-Lopes in Rio de Janeiro, Elina Westinen and Sanna Tapionkaski in Jyväskylä, Dong Jie in Beijing, Peidong Yang in Singapore, Lijun Tang in Portsmouth, Leonie Cornips and Lotte Thissen in Maastricht, and Shuang Gao in Liverpool. Their inputs are absolutely crucial and are ardently acknowledged. I also wish to thank Jenny-Louise Van der Aa, Yan Dong, Xinyu Du, Xiaofei Hao, Amy Hsiao, Mingyi Hou, Jinling Li, Kunming Li, Yizhen Miao, Paul Mutsaers, Ted Nie, Liang Tang and Dorina Veldhuis, thank you for sharing this journey.

The preparation of this book has also received enormous academic, moral and emotional support from so many wonderful colleagues I have worked with. I limit myself to mentioning only a few: the late Koen Jaspaert, Carine Defoort, and Xiaoli Wu at University of Leuven, Lianyi Song at London School of Oriental and African Studies, Mohammed Khalil, Eun-mi Postma, Maarten Schrevel, Tin Chau Tsui, Marlene van Heel-Bradbury and other team members at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences. Thank you sincerely for helping make this journey unforgettable and rewarding.

I cannot possibly present this book without mentioning the folks who are part of the 'field' that has informed my understanding about the margins in China, and who have given me unconditional guide and assistance while I was working in that marginal field. I am most grateful to members of my family who meticulously organized accommodation and transport logistics for me however inconvenient or improbable the circumstances were at the time, so that I could concentrate on canvassing the local social and geographic space in as much as possible safety and comfort. My sincere thanks also goes to the following people, most of whom I have not had the opportunity to express it to in person: Feng Guangping, Guo Wanmin, Lei Xiang, Lei Yong, Liangliang, Long Jianghua, Luo Xuefen, Tan Qinghu, Tan Zhiman, Tang Xinxin, Tian Min, Zhang Ting, Zhang Xiuju, Wang Mian, Xiang Xuefei, Xie Hongyan, Yu Fang and Zeng Kun. Without their inside knowledge and willingness to open up their world for my observation, the studies presented in this book could not at all have been materialized. Their wisdom and kindness humble me.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank Resy, Erich, Judy, Ira, Marlies, Ellen, Anne, Xiang, Shan Shan, Maaike, Hyacinth, Chia, Yume, Mieko, Alice, Nan, Linda and Gillian whose enduring friendship and love have seen me through the most difficult days of this journey. I dedicate this book to Colin, who encouraged me to see the world from a fresh perspective and to take on the challenge of writing it in the first place, but, sadly, will not be present to witness the final harvest of fruit.

Maastricht, August 2017
Xuan Wang

INTRODUCTION

Exploring globalization in China's margins

In their introduction to a recent volume on language and superdiversity, Arnaut, Karrebæk and Spotti (2017b) invoke the image of a 'poiesis-infrastructure nexus' as a metaphor characterizing the present stage of globalization. This poiesis-infrastructure nexus is the moment in which human situated creativity ('poiesis') is deployed in relation to specific larger-scale 'infrastructural' conditions. The latter impose normative conditions and constraints on what can happen, while the former still has a tendency to unsettle and dislodge these norms and shift them into new forms of cultural practice. In contexts of globalized cultural production, both the forms of poiesis and the infrastructural conditions and constraints have acquired degrees of unpredictability and complexity that pre-empt the unquestioned use of 'standard' methodological and theoretical toolkits, and demand careful scrutiny by means of on-the-ground ethnographic analysis.

I came across Arnaut et al.'s reasoning quite late in the course of constructing this book. Yet their 'poiesis-infrastructure nexus' aptly summarizes much of what my work has been about over the past few years, and it can serve as a fitting and recurring metaphor for discussing the results of this work as presented in the chapters to follow. The work itself is a study set within the sociolinguistics of globalization, addressing a variety of specific issues connected to that broad thematic space, all of them located in what one could call the margins of China. I will present in the chapters to follow, thus, a series of studies on globalization in the margins in which, each time, what emerges is the complex and dynamic intersection of poiesis and infrastructure. Let me now enter into greater detail explaining the rationale, the main motives, and the structure of this work.

1 Globalization in the margins

This book opens with a chapter called 'Globalization in the margins'. In this paper, published in 2014, we argued that studies of language and globalization, including the more recent focus on superdiversity (cf. Blommaert and Rampton 2016), displayed what one could call an urban bias, complicated by a metropolitan bias in which the major 'world cities' (think of London and New York) were the preferred loci of research into the escalating patterns of diversification witnessed by the likes of Vertovec (2007). This urban and metropolitan bias becomes harder to sustain and motivate, the more

we see global interconnectedness emerge and strengthen by means of that crucial infrastructure of the present stage of globalization: internet and mobile technologies. The internet, one can easily observe, brings very 'urban' and 'metropolitan' phenomena to places not usually identified with such descriptors: peri-urban areas, rural ones, places far removed from the major world centres of finance and economic activity, of power and cultural dominance. The multi-scalar nature of social, cultural, economic and other activities typical of what is known as globalization (and essential in the analysis of such activities; Blommaert 2010), including the globalized templates for such activities (cf. Appadurai 1996), are no longer things observable only in the London borough of Newham or the New York neighbourhood of Brooklyn. We now see globalization phenomena in 'marginal' places, too, and this book will consider exactly such phenomena.

The global infrastructure of internet and mobile technologies has led many to believe that the world has 'flattened' (Friedman 2005) and that a degree of (at least cultural) uniformity has been spread worldwide. This view is overly optimistic: the world remains a different place when looked at not from within major centres, but from within its margins. Put differently, the ways in which people in Africa experience and engage with globalization processes are certainly very different from those in Europe. One fundamental reason for this is that the degrees of availability and accessibility of the crucial infrastructures for globalization are, and remain, notably different across the globe. Margins, as we argued in 'Globalization in the margins', are characterized by *partial access to specific infrastructures for globalization*, and the effects of such incomplete and differentiated degrees of access are new forms of hierarchical inequality, new forms of social, political, economic and cultural stratification. In our 2014 paper, we identified three domains where such new forms of inequality could be observed in globalization processes:

(a) new media and communication technologies;
(b) new forms of economic activity such as call centres and heritage tourism;
(c) new forms of (re)productions of local identities within (also newly reconfigured) centre-margin frameworks.

Each of these three domains can of course be looked at separately; in this book, however, I attempt to discuss all three of them.

I will do so in a particular way, inspired now by the 'poiesis-infrastructure nexus' metaphor with which I opened this introduction. The new media and communication technologies *and* the new globalized modes of economic activity, such as heritage tourism, can be seen as *all* involving new forms of identity work. More precisely: the former can be seen as the 'infrastructure' – the broader and more enduring conditions of becoming – of the latter, which can be seen as the 'poiesis' part of the nexus. The infrastructural dimension of technological instruments such as internet and mobile

technologies is more or less self-evident. But access to global economic modes of production, such as heritage tourism (or *specific forms* of heritage tourism, to be discussed later in this book) can equally be seen as 'infrastructural', in the sense that they also appear as compelling conditions – both enabling and restricting ones – for specific, local identity-related cultural activities.

With these mechanisms and dynamics in mind, I can now state the general research question guiding this work. This book considers from a sociolinguistic perspective the affordances of global infrastructures in the margins. More precisely, I will address the question:

Do these global infrastructures (new technologies and heritage tourism) create specific affordances in the margins of China?

Addressing this issue necessarily involves three dimensions: empirical, theoretical and methodological ones. In what follows, I will try to elaborate on each of them. But the first thing I need to do is to explain what I mean by the 'margins of China'.

2 The margins of China

Even if the term 'marginal' might be understood as evaluative, carrying a connotation of inferiority, there is something objective and factual to it. In scholarly traditions such as World-Systems Analysis (Wallerstein 2004), globalization processes are analysed as developing between 'centres', 'semi-peripheries' and 'peripheries' (or margins), in which each of those units occupies a specific position in a division of labour. 'Peripheries' are typically zones of the world in which raw materials are produced and sold, with modest profits, to 'semi-peripheries' where these products are converted into half-finished products (yielding higher surplus values), to be sold once again to 'centres' where they are converted into high-profit finished products. While such systems have a degree of stability, with 'the West' rather consistently taking 'central' positions, and what was known as the 'Third World' rather consistently taking positions in the margins, it is important to keep in mind that these positions may change over time, and may even change depending on the specific products or activities involved in the process.

The People's Republic of China is a case in point. Over the past three decades, the country has seemingly unstoppably risen from a position in the economic and political margins of the world (where it had been for at least over a century), to one of global prominence in industrial production, capital accumulation, and political and military strength. This rapid rise to superpower status, however, has not eliminated structural issues of inequality. While China can presently boast the largest number of billionaires on earth, it also counts hundreds of millions of disenfranchised rural population as well as many millions of migrant proletarians clustering in the large cities (Dong 2011), and

an educated white-collar urban 'precariat' of a similarly huge size (Du 2016). In this sense, China as a country can be considered an emerging centre in the world economy and politics, but it has its own margins.

These margins include not only geographically remote small-town folk and ethnic minorities, such as among others the Tujia of Enshi, a rural area in the Central Chinese Province of Hubei (itself in many ways a margin in China compared to the national political centres and the coastal regions where most of the industrial wealth is concentrated). They also include members of the urban precariat performing intense online activities of self-deprecation known as 'diaosi'. Given the strong emphasis on cultural and social conformity systematically articulated by the Chinese authorities, the margins also include 'subcultural' communities involved in cultural and social practices judged to be undesirable, deviant or 'disharmonious' by the state. Hip-hop artists, for instance, do have an audience in China, but their musical activities are more often than not seen from 'above' as outside of the canon of Chinese public culture (e.g. De Kloet 2010; Liu 2014). In this book, the practices of hip-hop artists, 'diaosi' members, and the Tujia ethnic minority will be discussed, all of which are arguably situated in the margins of Chinese mainstream society.

Such people in the margins are facing a variety of challenges, one of which is to claim, establish and consolidate their identities as members of 'lowly valued' groups or communities. They all need to search actively for audiences, publics and communities in which they and their activities can be made to fit, are appreciated and recognizable as legitimate or authentic (to both the centre and the margin). In view of this, they often have to rely on semiotic resources that are themselves indexicals of marginalization: fangyan (nonstandard Chinese varieties), accented forms of English, minority languages, memes and forms of subcultural slang. The two global infrastructures mentioned above, the internet and the globalized heritage tourism framework, provide opportunities for that. These infrastructures offer specific and sometimes unique affordances through which such audiences, publics and communities can be reached and constructed. How this is achieved, and how actors involve themselves in complex online and offline semiotic work in order to achieve this, is what the chapters in this book will try to demonstrate.

One further issue, although controversial, is crucial to take into account when engaging with the studies presented in this book. As said earlier, following Wallerstein's World-Systems Analysis, centres and peripheries may shift and positions in the world emerge from specific products or activities. A country can be a centre for industrial production, for instance, but a margin in the field of industrial innovation (as captured, for instance, in China's latest aspiration to move from 'made in China' to 'created in China'). There are many ways in which China is still a relative margin in the world (e.g. Cochran and Pickowicz 2010), arguably in the world of the Internet.

This may sound contentious, considering the impressive figures often attached to the spread of the internet in China and the many sophisticated internet applications and platforms available there. The reason why China can be considered a margin in

the sphere of the internet is that it is only partly integrated into the world wide web, and that it operates as an 'island' within this global system in many respects. The Chinese state's restrictive internet policies, through implementing the stringent network filtering measure nicknamed 'the Great Firewall' and rigorous censorship and self-censorship systems (discussed in the Chapters 3 and, especially, 5), have minimized the possibility that worldwide platforms such as Google, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are available to average Chinese internet users. The functions of such platforms as search engines and social media tools are performed by local, Chinese equivalents such as Baidu, Weibo, Youku and WeChat. While this development has given rise to an astonishingly intense and buoyant universe of web-based social and cultural activities *within* China, it has at the same time limited China's connections with large parts of the world and prevented most of such social and cultural expressions from directly interacting with counterparts elsewhere in the world. Technologically, the Chinese internet is advanced. In terms of global reach, however, considerable parts of it remain confined to China. This, for instance, will characterize my analysis of the hip-hop artists and the 'diaosi' members: the reach of their online communicative practices is not global but regional.

As I will discuss in the next section, the fact that China remains a margin in the world of the internet and that it has its own geopolitical and sociocultural margins, have implications to scale-effects when we consider globalization processes. The people whose practices I discuss and analyse in this book can perform and organize their specific poiesis practices due to the availability of globally developed infrastructures. But that does not immediately make their practices 'global': they are 'globalized', but in the margins.

3 Theoretical and methodological challenges

In a recent critique on the advancement of sociolinguistics, Blommaert (2017: 25) states:

> … the dialectic of global and local forces in the experiential life-world of human beings (…) is perhaps the most complicated descriptive and methodological issue in the study of globalization processes, and the introduction of a new generation of electronic media has certainly complicated matters.

My experience in working on this book in many ways confirms this. The theoretical and methodological ground on which I stood at the start of the process has changed and developed considerably, and the range of issues crucial to understanding the processes I will examine never remained stable. These issues are empirical, theoretical

and methodological: what is it that we are observing, how can we make it understandable, and what are the tools best adjusted to that task? I try to summarize some of the points that will be raised and addressed in the chapters of this book.

Empirically: the role of specific forms of online/offline semiotic creativity; the deployment of specific semiotic resources such as fangyan, slang, internet memes, etc.; the emergence of a recognizable 'Tujia' ethnicity in the context of globalized heritage tourism frames.

Theoretically: the complexities of contemporary forms of authenticity; the polycentric scaled and dynamic nature of social systems such as those I characterized as 'the margins of China'; the particular interplay of opportunities and constraints contained in the notion of 'affordance'.

Methodologically: the combination of online and offline ethnography, of discourse analysis, social semiotics/multimodality and linguistic landscape analysis, language policy analysis, language ideologies.

All of these issues will appear in this study, and all of them will to various extents be addressed. I am, at the same time, mindful of the fact that some of them will be addressed in a less than satisfactory way and that several will be developed and amended as we move through the chapters. This is either because more adequate frames of interpretation became available after several of the articles presented here were published; or because, until I hit upon the concept of 'poiesis-infrastructure nexus', I had not found a sufficiently satisfactory way of convergently addressing the line of questions they raise. I will nonetheless attempt to outline below some of the major critical issues that emerged during my work.

3.1 Identity work and authenticity

Allan Bell (2016), reviewing the publication record of *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, notes that the topic of identity has been one the most fertile ones in sociolinguistic scholarship over the past two decades. There has indeed been a tremendous development of our conceptualization of identity and identity work based (inevitably) on the sociolinguistic and semiotic resources people deploy in social interactions with one another (e.g. Omoniyi and White 2006; Rampton 2006; Riley 2007; Edwards 2009; Preece 2016).

An early insight I adopted and developed in this work is that identity is best examined (a) as a concrete set of social practices, (b) using specific socially meaningful communicative resources, the value and outcome of which are negotiable, (c) and which are drawn from what can be called an identity 'repertoire', (d) strongly influenced by 'infrastructures', i.e. by the availability of, and levels of access to, specific larger-scale

resources (new technologies and global templates, obviously, being very important in that).

The Chapters 2, 3 and 4 to follow will engage with precisely these issues, and will develop them. The central methodological point in these chapters, and in later ones, will be that a close look at what people actually do when they perform social practices, and the resources they (can) actually use while performing them, offers the most realistic and accurate possible inroad towards understanding contemporary identity construction. There is little, for instance, that can be established in the way of 'hip-hop identity' in the two cases we shall discuss, prior to the specific semiotic actions performed by the actors aspiring to be recognized as 'rappers'. Both the rapper based in Enshi and the one based in Beijing need access to the web in order to become rappers, in the sense of a socially established identity and as membership of a subcultural community in contemporary China. Both also deploy specific linguistic and semiotic resources on the web, as preconditions for establishing and consolidating their identities: forms of slang, a crafty play with fangyan elements, codeswitching, rhyme and a thematic orientations towards being 'real'.

We see clear instances of the poiesis-infrastructure nexus here; we also see the contemporary complexities of the local-global interface in such identity work; and we see the two aspects are intertwined. Both rappers we observed were acquainted with the global templates of hip-hop culture and performance, and their access to the relevant internet infrastructure was vital to that. It was also vital for achieving a level of higher-scale visibility and recognition as rappers. It is safe to suggest that neither of them would have achieved this degree of artistic fulfilment and identity potential without such technological scale-jumping instruments (I therefore specify them as 'online rappers' in the chapters). This, we suggest, represents both the 'infrastructure' and the 'global' dimension of the identity work they performed. The 'local' dimension, however, and with it the dimension of poiesis, revolved around and deployment of distinctly lower-scale resources such as slang and fangyan (mixed with localized English and other hip-hop codes), the thematic invocation of a sense of (Chinese or sub-Chinese) locality in their work, and around the circulation of their work primarily among (regional) Chinese fellow members of the hip-hop community. Note that there is also a marked distinction between what 'local' means to the Enshi rapper and to the Beijing rapper within China: it is also a scaled phenomenon. Different scales *have to* be combined in their identity work, and this demanding work of cross-scalar communication requires the development of intricate and sophisticated identity repertoires (discussed in Chapter 4).

I pointed towards 'requirements' in the previous lines, because the processes observed have a dimension of *normativity* which is often overlooked. The resources selected and assembled by the rappers are obviously 'poietic' in the sense of uniquely individual and creative, situated and contingent. But they are also 'infrastructural' in the sense that these resources, and the actual ways in which they are performed in practice, need to comply with a range of norms, both those of globally recognizable

hip-hop and those of locally recognizable positions in Chinese social and cultural universes. And we must not forget the norms imposed by the Chinese authorities on internet communication as mentioned earlier, in which certain forms of expression are not just dispreferred but overtly prohibited and punishable, and in which access to global sources as well as access to international publics are curtailed. So the rappers I worked with need to satisfy a polycentric set of norms, and they need to do that in regulated and highly specific ways. The balance between global and local requirements is not easy to establish; it is not necessarily the case that being recognized as a member of the Chinese hip-hop communities would demand 'more' global features, but the opposite is also difficult to assess. There needs to be *some kind of* balance between global and local forms of normativity, as well as sufficient amounts of unique and creative work, in order to become a 'real' rapper in China. Identities are creative as well as deeply normative social and cultural phenomena.

Taken together, the two rappers offer a clear case of global-local inter-scale identity work, and a large literature substantiates this (e.g. Mitchell 2001; Pennycook 2007; Alim et al. 2009; Westinen 2014). Hip-hop, one can say, is the emblematic object of cultural globalization, and in some literature the overwhelming 'globalness' of such phenomena is invoked to imply that the nation-state is on its way out (cf. Alim 2009). It is certainly not in the case of China, however, and the remainder of the book (Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) engages in several ways with the complex interplay of local, national and global scales. I mentioned above that the rappers in question have to take into account, among other things, the heavily policed internet norms as well as the explicit monoglot language norms imposed by the Chinese state authorities. Chapter 5 (also in Chapter 3) discusses the way in which a political-ideological notion of 'harmony' is implemented as a coercive language and discursive ideology on Chinese social media, pushing internet users towards a kind of sociolinguistic convergence which excludes overt forms of dissent, and making the aspired and performed identities such as those of the online rappers susceptible (and vulnerable) to a range of sanctions. In general, as we explain in Chapter 4, the identity repertoires of people such as the ones considered in this book are resources for creativity, but often within rather sharply drawn boundaries. As said, the nation-state is manifestly a scale-level to be reckoned with, especially when we consider the balance between affordances and constraints in online and offline identity practices in contemporary China.

At the same time, the overt normative directive from the state provokes a considerable amount of covert semiotic protest and contestation, by means of wordplay and the use of memes (as shown in Chapter 5), and by means of elaborate self-identifying practices documented in Chapter 6. The Chinese internet, as we discuss there, is characterized by the tension between draconian censorship and vibrant online activism (Zhou 2005; Yang 2009; Xiao 2011; Li, Kroon and Spotti 2014; Du 2016, etc.). The latter also draws on 'local' resources, i.e. resources that are socioculturally and politically meaningful from within a Chinese context. While the internet censorship strategies of the Chinese authorities operate via resources *of* the nation-state, the contestation

practices operate on resources *in reaction to* the nation-state. In this sense, we begin to see the complexities of accuracy in defining scales here: while in both cases 'China' is the scale of circulation of these sets of resources, the resources deployed in contesting the state hegemony are clearly drawn from some other, 'sub-state' universe of meaning and practice. And sociolinguistic analysis can at least assist us in detecting these complexities: while the state as well as its opponents both draw on the reservoir of 'Chinese' linguistic and semiotic resources, the kind of 'Chinese' deployed by the contesting 'diaosi' and other dissidents is different, deliberately reconfigured even, from that of the censoring state authorities.

I extend this line of analysis in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 from what is usually called 'subcultures' to 'minorities'. In these chapters, we are still addressing the margins of China — in particular, a geopolitical margin, a small peripheral area of Enshi in Hubei province, among an ethnic minority called Tujia. The Tujia in Enshi were only recently declared an ethnic minority by the state, and the chapters document some aspects of the ways in which this relatively new status needs to be implemented by means of elaborate practices of what I call 'authenticity design', in view of integrating the economically struggling area into the globalized economy of heritage tourism.

'Authenticity' is a term suffering from over-usage and conceptual fuzziness (Coupland 2014: 15), and a recent literature documents the tremendous complexities facing those who use the term as well as those who desire it as a qualification (e.g. Blommaert and Varis 2013; Wilce and Fenigsen 2014; Lacoste, Leimgruber and Breyer 2014). The Chapters 1 and 2 (also Chapter 3) of this book, for instance, belong to the scholarly interest in the global spread of hip-hop authenticity (Pennycook 2007). While the term invariably invokes some substantial degree of 'being real', 'true to oneself' and 'original' (as opposed to 'imitation'), and while it is the crucial marketing argument in heritage tourism, my analysis in the Chapters 7, 8 and 9 shows overwhelming evidence of 'inauthenticity', although I will explain this soon. The Tujia in Enshi engage in conscious 'design' of features of dress, conduct and economic production that derive more from global and regional templates of an imagined tradition in the margins of China, than from any 'endogenous' and traditionally transmitted set of sources. 'Tujianess' is carefully manufactured, performed and displayed in the linguistic landscape in ways that reveal a high degree of sensitivity not just to 'authenticity' but also to constraints (real or imagined) imposed by the normativity attached to 'Chineseness', as well as from the demands of a globalized economic template of heritage tourism. This minority group is simultaneously looking at themselves, at the Chinese state, and at their customers. Authenticity, as a result, is a complex and polycentric phenomenon sensitive to a broad range of normative constraints; and in this sense, we see similarities between the identity work performed by members of the Tujia community and that by the 'diaosi' and the rappers.

One of the striking things that emerged in my fieldwork among the Tujia in Enshi was the highly selective and even contrived ways in which their designed authenticity was practiced and performed. There is no 24/7 Tujia-ness observable, or at least, the

Tujia-ness that is presented in the heritage tourism market is largely absent from the everyday social and cultural reality of the members. It is *chronotopic*, i.e. it is a specific form of identity performance connected to specific timespace formats. It involves careful preparation, a specific setting, and a highly exceptional display of forms of cultural practice (dance, song, dress) not generally observable outside of such specific (and special) timespace frames. Nevertheless, within such chronotopes, participants really *are* Tujia. It is not as if their special 'chronotopic' forms of performance would make them 'inauthentic': during such staged performances of Tujia-ness they are 'special' Tujia, the Tujia as seen from the viewpoint of the global heritage tourism and the national multiculturalism scripts.

In retrospect, the forms of identity display I examined with online performers such as the rappers and the 'diaosi', are undoubtedly chronotopic forms of display, too. As said at the very outset: the poiesis-infrastructure nexus is a *moment* set in a highly specific context which we call 'chronotope'. It is not an abstract given, but something concrete, emerging and contingent, in which actors use the available resources within sets of material and immaterial (normative) constraints so as to create identities and submit them to others in social interactions.

3.2 The sociolinguistics of globalization in the margins of China

The work I present is sociolinguistic in scope and ethnographic in approach. The latter will be the subject of Section 3.3 below. In this section I provide a brief set of reflections on how linguistic and other semiotic materials appear in the study, as key components (and evidence) of the complex, polycentric and multi-scalar identity practices explained in Section 3.1 above.

My sociolinguistic thinking has been largely shaped by the emerging paradigm of the sociolinguistics of globalization (e.g. Coupland 2003, 2010; Blommaert 2005, 2008, 2010; Jacquemet 2005; Pennycook 2007, 2010, 2012), with its emphasis on:

(a) *resources* rather than 'languages' as the units of analysis, with these resources being indexically ordered;
(b) *mobility* as a key feature in understanding what such resources are actually used for in everyday life;
(c) the *importance* of *new technologies* for understanding the globalized sociolinguistic world.

The details of this paradigm and how I have applied it in my work will be offered in the relevant chapters. Here I provide a short review of how the paradigm has organized my analyses of sociolinguistic phenomena in this book. For this, the three points listed above as defining the sociolinguistics of globalization will be the guideline.

The first point includes the now widespread notion of 'languaging' (Jørgensen 2008; Creese and Blackledge 2010; Juffermans 2015): the fact that when communicating people make particular assemblages of the available semiotic resources in such a way that they satisfy (or try to satisfy) the demands of the communicative situation. Such assemblages may correspond to conventionally recognized languages (such as English, Chinese and so forth), but might as well be composed of *elements* drawn from such languages. The point is that the origin of resources in the form of conventionally recognized languages is just one element in understanding the functions of languaging. More important are notions such as *register* and *genre* (Agha 2007) and *style* (Coupland 2007): specific 'bits' of languaging tailored according to sociocultural norms so as to fit specific chronotopes, with identity effects. Academic lecturing requires the performance of an academic genre (the lecture) and academic registers (e.g. a formal, standardized and technical register of 'philosophy'), and adequate styling and performance of such genres and registers will bestow an 'academic' identity onto the actor performing them. 'Resources', importantly, can include non-linguistic items too: non-verbal behaviour, but also objects, images, sounds and other broadly conceived, *multimodal* semiotic tools for meaning making (cf. Kress 2010).

The second point has led to an awareness that much of what we know as language is *made for mobility*. In an era of globalization characterized by social activities at various different scale levels, people communicate often in specific ways in order to 'reach out' from where they are to other, 'translocal' addressees. 'World languages' are such examples: academics around the world currently use varieties of English in order to address translocal, international audiences. But when we return to 'languaging', we can see that even the use of highly 'local' resources (such as dialect) can be useful in reaching translocal audiences. Communities, even tight-knit ones, can be dispersed over large geographical areas, and resources indexing intimacy and authenticity must be deployed to keep contact with them.

The third point, the importance of new technologies, obviously affects the previous two points. It is through online technologies that a new market of resources is created, exchanged and adopted, and the same infrastructures offer unprecedented opportunities for translocal mobility. To comment on the first aspect: the internet is overwhelmingly *visual* as a medium, and multimodality (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; Kress 2010) is an essential tool for analysing what goes on there. The resources of the 'virtual' world are scripted ones, (relatively) static yet dynamic, linguistic as well as non-linguistic, and they now operate in online-offline sociolinguistic processes in which resources gathered and acquired on the web can be used for and in connection with offline displays and performances.

How can these insights of a sociolinguistics of globalization be made relevant in the margins of China?

The online-offline dynamics is central to much of the work presented here, and consequently, a large amount of the resources studied here are scripted and multimodal, and designed specifically for translocal mobility through usage on the internet.

Considering, for instance, the rappers discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, we see how both Enshi-based Zeng Kun and Beijing-based Liangliang use the web and its resources to produce a 'virtually real' identity of 'rapper', submitted to a translocal (potentially pan-Chinese) audience of hip-hop fans. The latter, as a community, could be called (following Maly and Varis 2015) a 'translocal micro-population': a community of people dispersed over a vast geographical space but connected by a strong affinity for specific forms of lifestyle, values and identity orientations, for the continued supply of all of which online technologies are of crucial importance. In the case of Zeng Kun, an isolated and marginalized figure in a remote part of China, one could even say that the internet is the only social tool that effectively works for him.

The discursive and sociolinguistic characteristics of this translocal Chinese hip-hop community are articulated by both Zeng Kun and Liangliang through a mixture of linguistic-semiotic resources, articulating several scale-levels simultaneously. Both, in other words, perform languaging in genres, registers and styles recognizably oriented towards the normative expectations of the global and Chinese hip-hop communities. Zeng Kun is an accomplished 'languager' whose lyrics display artistically calibrated mixtures of Putonghua (standard Mandarin Chinese), fangyan (dialect-inflected Chinese) and 'bits' of English, including what can be described as 'English with a Chinese accent' as well as 'hip-hop English'. Liangliang, in turn, blends Chinese, English and Korean phrases into his rhymes, deploying slang and vernacular forms in the process. While the ideologies of their hip-hop culture dictate strong expressions of 'locality' ('keeping it real'; Pennycook 2007), the concrete forms of languaging they perform reach out to translocal audiences, especially those in China who are capable of decoding the intricate blending and mixing in their songs and passing value judgments on them. They also point towards the global templates of hip-hop subculture in adopting rhymes and beats, and some global (English-origin) hip-hop slang; but inserting the local emphases is, perhaps surprisingly, very much part of those global templates. These sociolinguistic features show how, in their work, both rappers orient towards simultaneously operating complexes of polycentric norms over different scales.

All of what has been described so far is evidently 'poietic', in the sense of creative and productive, and as emanating from a relatively large degree of agency by the actors performing their identity work. On the other hand, as we have repeatedly seen, an important part of what Zeng Kun and Liangliang have to do online is publicly seen by some as potentially transgressive and politically questionable. Thus, apart from the first kind of creativity we mentioned here (the 'poietic' creativity), both also need to perform what we call (in Chapter 4) 'forced creativity': they need to cleverly avoid, in their languaging, expressions or messages that may provoke the dominant language norms, or the internet censors who have the power enough to erase websites, blogs and individual messages and thus cut the ties between individuals and their translocal micro-populations. This, as we have emphasized, is a very important set of normative constraints in the Chinese online world, and there is probably no way of reading the

texts of the rappers other than as results of careful languaging work in which the translocal hip-hop community is deliberately addressed for positive uptake, and in which the invisible norms and censorship are addressed in ways that must avoid or at least minimize negative uptake.

The same pattern, as we will see, occurs in the chapters documenting the ways in which members of the Tujia ethnic minority in Enshi attempt to construct an 'authenticity' in view of the development of heritage tourism. In Chapter 7, we can see how the same dynamics as that characterizing 'languaging' (the assemblage of all available resources required to satisfy communicative needs) is present in the 'cultural languaging' of the Tujia subjects, who assemble objects such as clothing styles and 'typical' forms of economic production in an attempt to capture a translocal (ideally transnational, global) tourist audience, while keeping an eye on the expectations of the state, and while emphasizing persistently a strong sense of (real or imagined) locality. What can be observed is polycentricity again, along with the multi-scalar nature of the various 'centres' whose normative expectations must be subscribed to.

This complicated manoeuvring is perhaps clearest in Chapter 8 on 'fangyan and the linguistic landscapes of authenticity'. In the context of this process of designing a recognizable authenticity, fangyan needs to be displayed in Enshi's linguistic landscape, since it is the 'local' language of this Tujia area and, as such, a potent element of their authenticity (as much as marginality). Several challenges are present, however, not the least of which is that fangyan is widely used as a spoken variety, but has no written codified form. Thus, a written form of fangyan must be 'invented' and then presented as 'emblematic' of their local authenticity. This, however, needs to be done in a circumspect way because of the strong Chinese language ideology of 'harmony" (see Chapter 5), which privileges Putonghua as the undisputed 'top' of the sociolinguistic hierarchy of the state. The outcome is that only small amounts of written fangyan are (and can possibly be) created and displayed in the local linguistic landscapes, just enough (as described by Moore 2017) to point towards their unique local authenticity, but not enough to serve as a fully-fledged communicative instrument, certainly not enough to suggest a radical rupture between the local Tujia authenticity and the state of which they are part. The Tujia, thus, use emblematic local fangyan of Enshi in specifically designed chronotopes of authenticity (Chapter 9), in carefully organized times and places where the display of such emblematic features of heritage tourism authenticity is preferred, encouraged, accepted and consumed.

Throughout, we can see how relevant the state is as a scale level. It operates as a constraint on the scale of circulation of messages and resources, and it prompts actors to engage in 'forced creativity', drawing on intensively dynamic forms of languaging that include wordplay, neologisms, the use of specific memes and interactions using memes, on standard and substandard language varieties, on accents and dialects, and so forth. Especially for those in the margins of China, elaborate and skilful languaging online and offline is a vital tool for establishing membership in translocal communities,

breaking out of the confinement of geographic and social marginalization, and constructing identities that are perceived as, to some extent, valuable and authentic. The sociolinguistic practices they use in view of this are invariably made for mobility, even if this mobility is in many ways intervened, curtailed and even defined by the state.

3.3 A multi-sited ethnography

I argued in Section 3.1 above that chronotopes are not abstract phenomena but actual, concrete contexts. In retrospect, the concrete nature of chronotopes explains the ethnographic approach throughout my work. Chronotopes are actual 'contexts' in which concrete practices are situated, and they can be described as such using the tools of ethnography.

Several chapters in this book articulate an alignment with what has become known as *sociolinguistic superdiversity* (Arnaut et al. 2016, 2017a). A feature of superdiversity as a paradigmatic intervention is the questioning of fundamental categories in social sciences and humanities. An instance of that is what I outlined in the previous subsection: questioning identity categories such as 'class', 'status' and 'ethnicity', but also that of 'culture', 'speech community', and of 'authenticity', in search for finer and more complex distinctions that reflect (in an 'emic' way) the everyday experience of social actors. Arnaut et al. (2017b: 12), quoting Gerd Baumann, argue that 'if superdiversity announces the collapse of traditional classificatory frameworks, then ethnography is a vital resource.' The same argument was made by Blommaert and Rampton (2016: 35) who advocated the development of 'linguistic ethnography as a supplementary lens' for looking at the new complexities of language, discourse and social structure in sociolinguistic superdiversity. In both instances, the argument in favour of ethnography is that, given a growing awareness of the complexity of language in a changing social environment, 'the contexts for communication should be investigated rather than assumed' (Blommaert and Rampton 2016: 33).

There were, however, challenges. Textbook ethnography generally prefers what one could call 'offline' contexts as its object of inquiry (e.g. Atkinson and Hammersley 2003; Blommaert and Dong 2010), whereas my research took 'offline' *and* 'online' phenomena jointly in focus. While the basic ethnographic principles remain similar in digital ethnography, working in online contexts and on online materials obviously involves very different materials and practices to be observed and understood (Varis 2016).

A second challenge is that my research did not focus on one singular set of events and actors, but on a number of very different ones. As we have seen above, the chapters in this book discuss rappers, 'diaosi' subculture members, Tujia cultural entrepreneurs, all 'in situ', also the 'inanimate' linguistic landscapes of Enshi in which the challenging balancing act between local, national and global scales is inscribed. It involved online observations and interviews as well as offline participant observation, interviews, image and audio recording, online and offline documentation and analysis. The

research documented in this book is definitely multi-sited, and uses a wide range of practical methods of data collection and analysis defying what is often presented as canonical in textbook ethnography. For me, this approach has been both inspired and compelled by the widely adopted principle of socially constituted and *socially realistic* linguistics as advocated by Hymes (1974), as well as an emerging emphasis on the nature of *complexity* in sociolinguistic research into the current processes of globalization (Blommaert 2013, 2016).

Finally, a third challenge was that, in my work, I attempted to give pride of place to 'infrastructures', as expressed in the formulation of my research question. As Arnaut et al. (2017b: 12–13) admit, this runs counter to some opinions about ethnography as primarily concerned with the momentary, uniquely situated and evolving social practices performed in tangible (material) social settings, with 'poiesis' in Arnaut et al.'s terminology. My target, when seen from that viewpoint, could once more be appraised as a deviation from established ethnographic practice, as an unusual kind of ethnography.

The details and motivations for the specific pieces of research in this book will be given in the relevant sections of the chapters discussing them. What I try to do here is to explain their consistency in spite of the somewhat bewildering variety of approaches, the theoretical and methodological assumptions that tie them together. In this, I take my inspiration from Hymes (1996), Blommaert (2013, 2015) and Arnaut et al. (2017a), all of whom advocate a more open and flexible kind of ethnography. What joins the diverse forms of research documented here together, spread over the diverse loci, objects, practices and processes, is a commitment to examine them:

a) *Comprehensively* and *in detail*, taking into account both the 'micro' practices and the semiotic resources used in them, as well as the 'macro' dimensions of cultural transmission, social structure and historical conditions of production and circulation;
b) Using the assumption that *realities are socially constructed* by their actors and derive their meaning from the interplay of practices and the meanings attributed to them;
c) And using the assumption that such practices, while uniquely situated and creative ('poietic'), are *simultaneously* made possible, conditioned and constrained by larger-scale 'infrastructures'.

These three elements turn research into ethnography, or at least align research with a paradigm of similar approaches, of which one of the labels is ethnography (Hymes 1974, 1996).

While this may be a way of motivating the diversity in research types and activities in this book as held together by a consistent set of principles, I am mindful of the fact that stating these principles does not answer all the questions that can be raised regarding the specific features of different pieces of research. I am aware that what I

have done over the past number of years, and what is reported in this book, are certainly explorative and quite often had to be conducted in a context (for instance regarding digital ethnography and linguistic landscape analysis) in which reliable methodological guidelines were still in the process of formulation and debate, and in which attempts towards codifying such methodological frameworks were contested and controversial (for instance regarding language and superdiversity). The research team in which I was involved made substantial contributions to a number of these emerging fields in the later stages of the work for this book (for instance Varis 2017 on online research; Blommaert and Maly 2016 on linguistic landscape analysis). My own work presented in this book, seen from that angle, documents a period of rapid change and intensive discussion about fundamental theoretical and methodological issues, in which I, along with the team in which I worked (and of which several members were co-authors of the chapters in this book), were involved. It is therefore necessarily unfinished and open-ended, even if it is based on a consistently applied set of ethnographic principles.

And to add to the above point, the journey I took in composing this book is also one in which I am engaged in ongoing ethnographic learning as a researcher. This is a crucial point to add, following the Bourdieusian critique on the reflexive relation between 'objective' research result and 'subjective' research process (Blommaert and Dong 2010: 65–67). This learning journey involves not only keeping up and in line with the growth and renewal of the research field in which my work is embedded, as explained above. It is also reflexive of my personal experience as an ethnographer who is confronted with and, thus, has to learn to navigate, the increasingly novel, diverse and complex sociolinguistic realties, and to allow the research agenda to be shaped and even led by such realities, including 'incidental' encounters unfolded in sometimes unexpected moments or places (Pinksy 2015). It is, furthermore, reflexive of my learning of the ethnographic knowledge construction process which requires particular ways (while 'unlearning' some other ways) to 'notice', investigate, interpret and report data extracted from complex realities, taking into account both 'etic' and 'emic' perspectives (Fabian 1983). Each chapter in this book, I hope, in one way or another reflects a certain phase or aspect of my learning journey towards ethnography of complexity, and taken together, they open up both the world of the margins in China's globalization and my own endeavour as an observer of it to the inspection of the readers.

4 Structure of the book

A roadmap for this book is presented as follows in order to further help the readers grapple with its varied topics, materials and arguments. In this introductory chapter, I have, drawing on the 'poiesis-infrastructure nexus' metaphor, outlined the overarching theoretical, methodological and empirical approach and motivation that will run

through and bind together the remainder of the book. Chapter 1 makes an all-encompassing argument for the study of the 'margins' in sociolinguistic globalization, and for an ethnographic approach to it. Chapter 2 presents the online rapper Zeng Kun in Enshi, the starting point of the ethnographic journey, and a detailed examination of his online hip-hop languaging produced from Enshi as a deep margin in China. This brings us to Beijing in Chapter 3 to take a look at Zeng Kun's counterpart Liangliang — who is situated in Beijing as a centre while in the margins of the global hip-hop and Chinese public cultures — and the features in his articulation of a hip-hop identity. Chapter 4 zooms out of these two cases of poiesis and discusses in general terms the Chinese internet as an emerging infrastructure, which offers both opportunities and constraints to identity making.

Chapter 5 extends the discussion on internet infrastructure by considering the state ideology of 'harmony' and its intriguing and poietic subcultural uptakes by dissent Chinese netizens, which are, paradoxically, afforded by the internet. Chapter 6 considers more closely a collective marginal voice of Chinese netizens expressed through 'diaosi' and spun off by the internet in reaction to overt online politics and benign online entertainment, and how the online *and* offline cultural and identity poiesis influence and intertwine with each other.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 continue with the inquiry about collective marginal identity, but back to the space of Enshi where the research journey began, and that inquiry now turns towards globalization processes as experienced by the ethnic minority community of the Tujia (of which Zeng Kun is a member), and towards heritage tourism as a distinctive infrastructure. Chapter 7 combines Zeng Kun's story with that of the emerging Tujia heritage tourism in Enshi, provoking the argument for semiotic design as 'inauthentic authenticity'. Chapter 8 examines specifically the designing process on Enshi's linguistic landscape for commodifying the Tujia heritage. Finally, in Chapter 9, a critical application of the concept 'chronotope' moves our analysis away from the essentialised binary view on authenticity versus inauthenticity, and offers a more realistic and emic perspective to the situated, contingent nature of organizing both aspects into one coherent identity project.

In the final chapter, I focus the discussions back onto the dynamics and complexity of the poiesis-infrastructure nexus in identity making in China's margins. While 'marginal' identities may point us towards considerable creativity and diversity, as shown in the various cases presented in this book, their operations are dependent on and largely defined by the online and offline infrastructures of globalization. What these infrastructures afford are increasingly polycentric and multi-scalar environments in which, even though people in the margins may gain a degree of mobility by reaching out to the translocal micro-populations, the processes are heavily mediated by a myriad of norms and, in the case of China, notably policed by the state. I close the book with an analogy to the Foucauldian notion of power, and I argue that the poiesis-infrastructure nexus is a nexus of power, which provides a perpetual drive for the semiotic production and reproduction of identities for those in the margins.

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CHAPTER 1

Globalization in the margins: Toward a re-evaluation of language and mobility

1 Introduction[1]

The world looks different when seen from its margins than when seen from its centres. Views from the centres tend to dominate, however, since margins are margins – that is, places of inferior importance. In this paper, we will discuss sociolinguistic globalization phenomena precisely in such 'marginal' environments. We will tackle globalization and its sociolinguistic implications from the perspective of new media and communication technologies, of new forms of economic activity and, last but not least, from the perspective of legitimacy in the contentious struggle between commodification of language and other semiotic resources and authenticity, asking whether claims on who has the right to produce, author, own, market and distribute authentic tokens of ethno-local belonging can still be advanced. While globalization in the margins appears straightforward and unproblematic, it is vital for our discussion here, that its parameters are clearly defined.

In its general sense, globalization is not a new, not even a recent process. Parts of the world were of course connected throughout recorded history, large migrations have been perennial in almost any part of the world, and large trade networks connecting contemporary continents have also existed for millennia (Modelski 1972; see also Mufwene 2008 and his well-documented work on language and cultural evolution through trade in history). What is now called globalization, therefore, is a particular historical phase in which interconnectedness of Appaduraian scapes and mobility of goods, people and knowledge have acquired unprecedented – indeed, global – scale levels. According to historians such as Hobsbawm (2007) and Wallerstein (2004), this historical phase coincides with the global expansion of capitalism, and it can, in turn, be broken down in shorter periods of development. The colonial era was such an era of deepened globalization (Mufwene 2010), and the post-Cold War era followed by a re-definition of the world order that extends till the present time is another one (Parkin 2012). As a consequence, it has brought us intensified global flows, both in volume and in speed, of people, goods, capital and symbolic social, political and cul-

[1] This chapter was first published as X. Wang, M. Spotti, K. Juffermans, L. Cornips, S. Kroon, J. Blommaert (2014), Globalization in the margins: Toward a re-evaluation of language and mobility. *Applied Linguistics Review* 5(1): 23–44.

tural objects including language and other semiotic resources. The advent of the internet and related mobile communication technologies has been instrumental to this stage of acceleration in globalization processes, adding a hyper-dynamic layer of communication, knowledge and information mobility to the increased levels of physical human mobility.

One of the metaphors handed down from history and social geography (Swyngedouw 1996; Uitermark 2002) as well as world system analysis (Wallerstein 2000) is that of scales. A concept that in its most basic form points toward the fact that socio-cultural events and semiotic processes of meaning making develop not along a horizontal continuum of spread, rather they develop and move on a vertical and stratified continuum of layered scales. Globalization, as we understand it here, revolves therefore around 'multiple embeddedness' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2013) – that is the process through which people in their everyday socio-cultural and socio-linguistic practices form relations across multiple networks – economic, political, social and cultural – that while locally situated involve connections with phenomena occurring at higher, translocal scale-levels, and have effects at all scale-levels involved. One of the contemporary outcomes of this embeddedness is called super-diversity: the 'diversification of diversity' (Vertovec 2007, 2010) consisting of an increased number of new, small grouped, scattered yet transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated, legally stratified people that move to, organize their lives and operate in and from new places with the assistance offered by new technologies and that give way to poorly studied and understood social, cultural and political forms of complexity (Arnaut 2012 provides an overview).

In sociolinguistics, these developments have been addressed in a wave of recent scholarship, often attempting to find descriptively adequate terminology for the complex phenomena observed: terms such as languaging and polylanguaging, transidiomatic practices, super-vernaculars, metrolingualism, translanguaging and so forth – although more or less differing in their portrayal and uptake of language and communication – all represent such attempts to break out of a methodological system currently experienced as constraining and in dramatic need of upgrading (see Blommaert and Rampton 2011 for a survey and discussion in relation to the emergence of superdiversity in Europe). Such terms were coined in order to be able to analyse new forms of communication emerging in typically superdiverse environments such as contemporary inner-city schools (e.g. Rampton 2006; Creese and Blackledge 2010; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Madsen, Karrebæk and Møller 2013); new forms of diaspora experiences emerging on the ground and being spread through the web (Machetti and Siebetcheu 2013; Li et al. 2012) as well as online environments (Leppänen and Hakkinen 2012; Varis and Wang 2011; Wang, Juffermans and Du 2012).

The phenomena encountered raised such analytic challenges that traditional approaches based on the descriptive and analytic stability of key notions such as 'language' and 'community', and in second order of universally used qualifiers such as 'ethnic', 'national' and 'religious' (to name just a few) had to be replaced by a new

vocabulary and toolkit in which very little was taken for granted. This methodological effort, however, quickly spilled over into 'atypical' domains: it was gradually realized that the new tools of work on language in superdiversity could also be applied on older and more common phenomena in the field of language, communication and identity, and that the new phenomenology of sociolinguistic superdiversity could serve as a prompt to look across the entire field of studies for renewed and more refined analysis (Silverstein 2013; also Makoni 2012; Blommaert 2013a). An awareness of the scalar and polycentric nature of communicative environments, of the connectedness and simultaneity of action by people across large distances, of mobility as a key element in imagining the social, sociolinguistic and cultural world: all of these elements are now increasingly seen as default elements in a new, post-Fishmanian sociolinguistic imagination where there is a shift in focus away from languages and speakers to one on resources and repertoires, and from presupposed fully-fluent speakers' competence to a sociolinguistics that looks at the individual whose competences are highly variable and often consist of rather fragmentary grasps of a plurality in differentially shared styles, registers and genres (Pennycook 2007, 2012; Blommaert 2010).

This prompt also worked in another direction, and this direction is central to this paper. Work on globalization has been concentrated on typical sites where features and phenomena are abundantly available: the huge contemporary metropolis with its explosive and conspicuous diversity in people and languages, its hyper-mobility and constant flux. Less typical places (Duarte and Gogolin 2013) – peri-urban and rural areas, peripheral areas of countries, peripheral zones of the world, peripheral institutional zones where minorities are relegated – have been less quickly absorbed into current scholarship. Yet, upon closer inspection, there is no reason to exclude these 'margins' from analyses of globalization processes and of their sociolinguistic implications. Globalization is a transformation of the entire world system, and it does not only affect the metropolitan centres of the world but also its most remote margins. Thus, we are bound to encounter globalization effects, also in highly unexpected places.

A survey of these reifications of globalization at the margins will be the topic of this paper. We shall suggest a specific angle from which such forms of globalization in the margin can be most usefully addressed. But before that, we need to briefly turn to the field of globalization studies and make a principled case for an open and 'complete' approach.

2 An urban bias?

Cities, wherever they are, are dense concentrations of resources: of populations and of their infrastructures. Such infrastructures include governmental, administrative-bureaucratic services; economic and financial centres; layered labour, housing and commodity markets; centres of knowledge and learning such as schools and universities; hospitals, sports, culture and leisure facilities. Cities, consequently, are social, cultural

and political laboratories where innovations appear if not first, then surely most overtly and visibly.

In the field of globalization studies, and spurred early on by Peter Hall (1966) and later by Saskia Sassen (1991) and Janet Abu-Lughod (1999), the gaze of scholars has been quite firmly on urban environments (see e.g. Connell 2000; Abrahamson 2004; Derudder et al. 2012). Such global cities were described as concentrations of various forms of power – which is not new – but also as crucial nodes in new worldwide networks of economic, financial, political and information activities now effortlessly transcending the borders of the nation-state and shaping new global hierarchical relationships (Castells 1996; Taylor 2004). The urban condition, so it was announced, has changed; an important part of that change was a transformation towards an urban 'vernacular globalization' in which diasporic and sedentary populations now created new forms of cultural and social life (Appadurai 1996).

In the field of sociolinguistic studies of globalization, the urban bias has also been observed, though to a lesser extent and with more nuance. It is outspoken in the subfield of linguistic landscaping (e.g. Backhaus 2007; Shohamy and Gorter 2009; also Scollon and Scollon 2003; Pan Lin 2009; Blommaert 2013b), and it is also true that many of the recent studies on sociolinguistic superdiversity are driven by data from globalized urban contexts (e.g. Rampton 1995, 2006; Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck 2005; Harris 2006; Creese and Blackledge 2010; Sharma and Rampton 2011; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Li Wei 2011; Cornips and De Rooij 2013). But at the same time, such urban-based studies have quite systematically been complemented with work on more peripheral contexts and we shall highlight some of that work below.

In that sense, the sociolinguistics of globalization extends the general trend in the sociolinguistic tradition, where work on urban contexts always went side by side with work on smaller and more peripheral communities. William Labov investigated language variation both in New York City and on the more peripheral island of Martha's Vineyard; John Gumperz worked in metropolitan London but also based some of his most ground-breaking insights on work done in India and in small villages in Norway; Dell Hymes investigated both inner-city Philadelphia and the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon; Michael Silverstein, also active in Warm Springs, combined work among aboriginal communities in Australia with analyses of outspokenly American urban phenomena such as the discourse of wine connoisseurs; and Erving Goffman attended both to the behaviour of people in public spaces in the big US cities and to that of inmates in mental hospitals. Landmark collections from the first generation of sociolinguists are telling; see the mixture of urban-Western and rural-Non-western studies in Hymes (1964) and Gumperz and Hymes (1972); and recall Joshua Fishman's early preoccupation with language problems in the Third World (Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta 1968). Whatever we currently have in the way of robust theory in our field is the product of studies on a broad variety of contexts. Note that this also counts for sub-fields such as educational linguistics and literacy studies.

There is also very little fundamentally or principally wrong with work on urban environments. One would not wish to argue that Labov's examinations of language variation in New York City were flawed *because they were urban*, or that Gumperz's insights into metaphorical codeswitching were brilliant *because they were rural*. One would also find it not easy to argue that studies such as Labov's cannot be profitably applied to rural environments, or Gumperz's to urban ones. What would be wrong, of course, would be a sociolinguistics that studies only and *exclusively* urban environments, because a comprehensive, a 'complete' sociolinguistics requires input from every possible environment in the world. It is the importance of comprehensiveness that pushes us towards more attention to studies in the periphery, because in the field of language-and-globalization studies, the current sample is unbalanced, so to speak, with far more work done on urban-central than on rural-peripheral environments. There is an analytical gap that causes our knowledge of peripheral parts of the globe to be inferior compared to that of more central parts of the world system. A science that would bridge this gap – a mature sociolinguistics of globalization – would be an extremely useful bedrock for applied and adjacent studies on language in society.[2]

Much more serious, however, is the danger of a metropolitan bias in our fields: the danger of seeing the world through the lens of those societies that form the current centres of the world system, with the assumption that what occurs there can and should be used as benchmark for studies elsewhere. This bias and its risks of theoretical impoverishment were powerfully thematised by, e.g. Canagarajah (1999), Makoni and Pennycook (2007) and Shi-xu (2009); it was a crucial argument in Blommaert's critique of discourse analysis (2005: 13–16) as well as in critical discussions of World Englishes and English teaching in a global context (e.g. Canagarajah 2006; Park and Wee 2012), where scholars now strongly advocate a 'decentred' perspective and emphasize the local conditions of emergence and development of the language (e.g. Higgins 2009; Seargeant 2009; Pennycook 2010; Blommaert 2010).

The issue here is more serious because it is of theoretical importance. It relates to old debates about 'emic' or 'insider' views: in order to understand mobility and with that, to understand how people organize, structure, and render meaningful their world, pre-scripted assumptions always need to be carefully balanced against what these people themselves articulate and offer as explanations – theory from below, the cornerstone of the ethnographic tradition. In research, this issue is connected to that of voice: how do we actually get this theory from below to inform our findings (Hymes 1996; Juffermans and Van der Aa 2013)? Answers to this question may differ, but share one general direction: we cannot neglect the detailed analysis of local contexts of

[2] The gap is bigger than what we discussed here. A recent special issue of *Journal of Sociolinguistics* edited by Theresa Lillis and Carolyn McKinney, argues that writing, and literacy in general, have been neglected in mainstream sociolinguistics, and advocates attention to the socio-linguistics of writing as a firmly embedded ingredient of a comprehensive sociolinguistics. See Lillis and McKinney (2013) and Lillis (2013).

usage, local semiotic economies and local language ideologies if we wish to understand how people themselves make sense of their lives and life worlds.

Whether such local conditions are urban or rural is *per se* immaterial, and it would be perilous to a priori assume any level of substantive and nontrivial stability or predictability on the basis of the urban-rural diacritic. Urban environments differ tremendously – compare e.g. Hackney with Soweto – and the same goes for rural environments. In each case, the point is to do the substantial work of inquiry and analysis, and avoid research frontloaded with a priori assumptions. What brings cases together can be, and is, often far more specific. To such specific features we now direct our attention.

3 Infrastructures of globalization

We stated at the outset that globalization revolves around scales and movements across scales. Such movements do not occur in a random fashion, they are structured and conditioned, and the major condition for globalization processes is the availability and accessibility of *infrastructures for globalization*. What is needed is access to instruments enabling connections between purely local events and translocal processes, patterns and developments, and these connections are dialectic: effects of them occur throughout the different scale levels.

We will therefore encounter globalization processes in peripheral places whenever such conditioning infrastructures are present there. The distribution of such infrastructures is not necessarily democratically organized, and peripheral areas can be characterized by *partial* access to *specific* infrastructures for globalization, differing by degree from the overwhelming concentration of such infrastructures in global cities. The effects of such partial access are *specific* forms of practice holding a hierarchical – inferior – position relative to what happens in more central parts. Focusing on infrastructures in the study of globalization, therefore, invites considerations of old and new forms of inequality between centres and peripheries, a relatively enduring aspect of the continuously changing world system. It also leads us to a precise identification of the margins: they are characterized by unequal access to infrastructures of globalization; thus, naturally, they can be located in cities as well as in the rural areas.

In what follows, we shall highlight three forms of globalization in the margins provoked by specific levels and forms of access to certain infrastructures of globalization: (1) new media and communication technologies; (2) new forms of economic activity, specifically call centres and heritage tourism and (3) new (re)productions of local identity formations driven by power asymmetries between people living in the centre and periphery in a nation state (Cornips, De Rooij and Stengs 2012).

We shall see that all these three forms of globalization trigger complex processes of sociolinguistic and cultural reordering and invite examination of several side effects.

We offer these points here not as a comprehensive survey of globalization in the margins; rather, they should serve as examples of such processes and how they can be studied, to be extended by complimentary research.

3.1 New forms of mediated communication technologies

People who wish to purchase state-of-the-art technologies of global communication must reserve a substantial amount of money. Contemporary standard equipment in this zone of human conduct involves a high-end smartphone, a tablet, possibly a laptop or desktop computer, a flat screen HD television, and a subscription to high quality and high speed WIFI and/or wired broadband internet access. Thus equipped, the contemporary communicator can access and produce almost unrestricted amounts of information all the time, from and to any place on earth where such facilities exist. Such supreme levels of 'being on' (Baron 2008) are evidently extraordinarily exclusive, and in most parts of the world people have to be satisfied with significantly less. Access to high-speed broadband, for instance, is seriously unequal around the globe. In 2011, Europeans had access to an average bandwidth of 90,000 bits per second, while Africans had to be happy with an average of 2,000 bits per second: an internet that works 45 times slower than the average European connection.[3] Access to mobile phone technologies, by contrast, has boomed in Africa, and over the last decade Africans (as well as many other people in the peripheries of the world system) have 'gone mobile' in a big way (see Velghe 2012a and Deumert and Lexander 2013 for discussions of Africa).

This does not mean, however, that the actually available instruments, and the modes of action they afford, are equally shared. In an insightful paper, Lemphane and Prinsloo (2013) show how deeply different and unequal access to mobile technologies can be in conditions of extreme social inequality: children in two South African families, both of the same ethnic and linguistic background, have fundamentally different possibilities depending on the material inequalities that determine their lives. One, a middle-class family, has access to advanced broadband internet search facilities, online gaming and multi-channel television enabling lots of multilingual learning interaction; the other, living in a nearby township, has no access to internet and must be satisfied with a much simpler mobile phone allowing individual, silent and uniform types of entertainment.

Notwithstanding such tremendous differences, however, access to internet (in its highly diverse qualities) and to mobile phone technology has created an infrastructure for globalization in the margins: areas hitherto relatively isolated can now be connected with other areas, and messages, information and forms of cultural expression

[3] See http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/jun/13/west-africa-high-speed-broadband. At the time of writing, a large sea cable project bringing broadband access in Africa closer to the level of Europe is being completed.

now flow to and from such peripheral areas. This has several effects, and we shall select two prominent ones.

One prominent effect is that the integration of margins into large networks of mobile communication *creates a vast and layered market* for popular forms of cultural expression. *Marginal performances can make it to the mainstream* by means of access – however limited – to contemporary media and communication technologies. Hip-hop is a case in point, and an expanding literature documents the emergence and growing prominence of hip-hop 'from the margins' within the global market of popular culture (Stapleton 1998; Pennycook 2007; Alim, Ibrahim and Pennycook 2009). Hip-hop, with its cultural and political emphasis on 'authenticity from below', lends itself to articulations from individuals and communities outside of the mainstream of society, and we witness a boom in 'vernacular' hip-hop – hip-hop using local dialects or minority and endangered languages (e.g. Pietikäinen 2008 and Ridanpää and Pasanen 2009 on rap in Sami language; Hornberger and Swinehart 2012 on rap in Aymara and Quechua).

First, access to translocal scale-levels in such instances provides new linguistic and semiotic affordances. Wang (2012, 2013) discusses the complex language usage of a rapper from Enshi, a very peripheral (ethnic minority) region in Hubei Province, China. Significantly, the rapper in question was discovered by Wang from Europe through the internet; his work circulates globally. The rapper him-self was an inconspicuous figure in his community: a school dropout who had been to jail for minor offences, and lived unemployed in a small room with his parents. The room had access to internet, however, and this gateway to (at least significant portions of) the world had exposed him to American as well as Chinese and other Asian hip-hop. The influences of this exposure were palpable in the rapper's work: in his lyrics, he would produce complex and non-random forms of code- and style-shifting, in which local Enshi dialect features would alternate with Standard Mandarin ones as well as with vernacular 'hip-hop English'. The code-alternation was not just acoustic: the rapper published his lyrics on a website, and in the written versions Chinese simplified character script would alternate with roman alphabet, evidently whenever English forms were used, but also (and considerably less evidently) whenever local Enshi vernacular forms were used. In his lyrics, thus, the Enshi rapper used semiotic resources he had gathered from other, translocal scale-levels – the scale of the Chinese nation and the scale of global hip-hop – and had deployed them in unique semiotic arrangements displaying a highly developed sense of the indexical opportunities and affordances offered by blending such resources.

This 'scale jumping', through which people from the margins can access through new media and mobile technologies resources not otherwise present in their local environments, has effects on *linguistic vitality* and on real people who would otherwise be stuck in the margins. Small minority (and often endangered) languages can acquire a new lease of life through mediated translocal circulation. All the studies referred to here underscore this: previously marginal language groups can now access scales of

exposure and uptake not available prior to the advent of the new technologies enabling the scale-jumping on which exposure and uptake depend. This also has effects on their broader cultural traditions, now also circulating in novel and dynamic ways (Malm 1993; Higgins 2009: Chapter 5).

Second, these new possibilities do not leave these languages untouched, though, and the second point we wish to discuss is *language* change as an outcome of access to new media and communication technologies. In our discussion of Wang's study of the Enshi rapper, we already encountered this: access to vital, new infrastructures of globalization creates a space for importing and deploying language resources from 'elsewhere', and the true creativity of popular culture artists is often nested in the capacity to produce innovative and complex forms of 'mixing' often amounting to new local-and-global forms of slang (e.g. Pennycook 2003; Pardue 2004; Machin and Van Leeuwen 2004; Becker and Dastile 2008; Williams 2012; Wang 2013).

Such new forms of language variation are a general effect, noticeable in almost every context in which new media and mobile communication technologies are present. The emergence and viral spread of phone texting codes, for instance, is beginning to be documented, also in the margins of the world system (e.g. Velghe 2012a; Deumert and Lexander 2013). The creative, yet quickly 'standardized' register of abbreviations and acronyms, peppered with an abundant usage of emoticons, is surely one of the highly visible language effects of the new media and technologies environment. Users experience it as highly effective and engaging, and as a tool for expanding and maintaining intense contacts with a network of addressees. What is often underestimated, though, is the sometimes extreme difficulty experienced by novice users of texting codes in acquiring the level of embodied enskilment required for seemingly simple texting operations; still, and in spite of such limitations, gaining access to texting skills can have significant effects on people's lives (see Velghe 2012b for an insightful study). In that sense, access to new media and mobile literacies displays the structural features of inequality observed in more traditional (pen-and-paper) literacies (cf. Juffermans 2010; Juffermans and Van Camp 2013).

Another feature of language change that scholars begin to explore is the effect of access to the new media and communication technologies on local or regional dialects. The rural areas where such dialects are used are no longer isolated places: migrant farm workers have diversified the community, and as we have seen earlier, even rural and remote areas have access to new media. Mutsaers and Swanenberg (2012) describe how young people from a rural area in The Netherlands developed a 'hyperdialect' influenced by a popular television comedy program in which this regional dialect – from the same region as the young speakers – was widely used. Exposure to popular media here provokes the transformation of local dialects, in such a way that dialects are still experienced as 'our own' while they have been infused with new indexical orders of belonging, ownership and legitimate usage. Similar complex transformations of local dialects have been observed among immigrant youngsters elsewhere

(e.g. Spotti 2007; Jaspers 2008), and the phenomenon is clearly germane to the changes in minority languages discussed above.

We conclude our discussion of the first major infrastructure of globalization here. We have seen that access to such infrastructures in the margins is often very limited compared to the levels of access prevailing in more central parts of the world system; but we have seen that in spite of these constraints, the advent of new media and communication technologies has had several, and major, effects on languages, language practices, and language relations in the margins. This, we believe, is a field of inquiry that awaits expansion and deepening.

3.2 New forms of economic activity

Globalization is among many other things an economic process, in which, following Wallerstein (2004), we see a global division of labour emerge. This global division of labour – driven by worldwide fiscal and wage competition – has created structures of economic dependency between various parts of the world; it has also created new forms of economic activity reflecting positions in the world system. We shall briefly address both aspects.

Outsourcing, offshoring, and delocalizing are firmly entrenched and emblematic features of the global economic landscape and its division of labour, notably in the so-called service industries. One especially conspicuous and interesting type of business in that domain is the widespread use of global call centres, often located in the peripheries of the world, with a notable concentration in South Asia (cf. Taylor and Bain 2005; Shome 2006 for general discussions). In the areas where they are located, call centre jobs are a sometimes unique opportunity for upward social mobility, especially among young and educated women, and the mass employment of young people in call centres has led to supportive state responses in language policy (e.g. Morgan and Ramanathan 2009; Rahman 2009). Fluency in (non-native) English is a requirement, since call centre agents from, say, India, communicate with customers in Europe and North America and need to pass – linguistically – unnoticed (Poster 2007); consequently, a booming support industry selling American accent has emerged (Blommaert 2010: 47–61).

Thus, we see how globally operating call centres affect the sociolinguistic economy and ecology of more peripheral areas. Similar effects occur across the field of a globalizing economic landscape, in which peripheries are networked with centres as well as with other peripheries, and in which a spectacular new market of language and accent emerges, shaping new and complex forms of multilingualism (see e.g. Raisanen 2012 for a case discussion of a Finnish engineer working with Chinese colleagues).

There is more however, and we can see the above as one part of a broader picture of economic transformations. In a series of influential studies, Monica Heller (2003, 2010a, 2010b) demonstrated how in the new global economy, specific niches are cre-

ated in which languages along with 'authentic' identities are commodified. This is evident in the case of English – see our remarks on the call centres – but it also affects small, regional and local languages and dialects. The niche is tourism, or more specifically what is now called 'heritage tourism', 'cultural tourism' or 'eco-tourism' (cf. Orams 1995; Poria, Butler and Airey 2003; see Jaworski and Pritchard 2005 for important discussions on the role of language in tourism).

Heritage tourism reflects the stratification of the globalized world system, because it is often situated in very marginalized areas, often populated by minorities and marked by economic poverty, and it is very often the only viable form of economic activity available to the local people (Hinch 2004; Ryan and Aicken 2005). The essence of heritage tourism revolves around an imagery of an unspoiled environment, both natural and cultural, and often crucially including the presence and performance of local languages and cultural (ritual) traditions: the fragile natural and cultural environment that can evoke a sense of nostalgia of wilderness and adventure in the consumer.

The key term, and the major commodity, is 'authenticity'. And in order to produce and market such authenticity, its producers often need to resolve to what Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) famously called 'the invention of tradition'. Groups need to design and perform 'tabloid histories' of their own past (Halewood and Hannam 2001: 567), as well as newly designed and adjusted 'traditional' costumes, food, rituals and language forms (see Amoamo 2007 on the Maori in New Zealand; Wang 2013 on the Tujia in China). The outcome, naturally, is something entirely new, a reflection (or refraction) of local traditions and customs mediated by, and tailored for, nonlocal audiences and for local economic and political needs as well as based on globally available templates for what 'authenticity' in heritage tourism might mean.

It is evident that heritage tourism can contribute to the survival and vitality of local, often endangered languages and forms of language usage. It has, in that sense, an effect not dissimilar from the one we discussed when we looked at the effects of new media and communication technologies earlier. And very much like the earlier point, heritage tourism can contribute to the *global circulation* of otherwise very marginal language material. Terms such as *aloha* (Hawai'an) and *hakuna matata* (Swahili) are global currency due to such processes. Such emblematic minority or marginalized language forms can also be consciously used and deployed by states to flag their multicultural and multilingual ideologies (Bell 1999). This rarely works as an engine for fundamental change – minorities will still be minorities – and in that sense, heritage tourism is an economic activity indicative of the marginality of groups developing it. But, at the same time, it offers at least a symbolic recognition of existence and legitimacy. For local people, heritage tourism at least creates a (sometimes lucrative) space of entrepreneurship, a labour market, and some degree of ownership and control over their own local material and cultural resources and the exploitation thereof (for the latter, see Bendix, Eggert and Peselmann 2012).

3.3 New forms of local identification

Another feature of new forms of language variation and change is the sociolinguistic and language-ideological restratification which is an effect of the interrelations of new shapes of local identities through language practices (and more general semiotic ones) driven by power asymmetries between people living in the centre and periphery in a nation state, and stimulated by some of the phenomena discussed above. These power asymmetries can, but need not be, 'real' in the sense that they can be measured in, e.g. economic strength. What is important is that people experience a difference between centre and periphery and that those inhabiting the (perceived) periphery feel marginalized economically, politically, culturally, and linguistically by the (perceived) centre.

Cornips, De Rooij and Stengs (2011, 2012) focus on language practices as the key locus of identity formation because language is an indispensable means for people to construct social relations and to project social identities. Moreover, the centre-periphery dynamics is often played out directly in terms of linguistic differentiation. In most countries of the world, one finds a deeply entrenched language ideology that is built on the unquestioned principle that a nation-state should be linguistically homogeneous (cf. Blommaert and Verschueren 1998). Linguistic uniformity is achieved by awarding the status of national language to the language spoken in the centre of political and economic power. This standardized national language is imposed on speakers of non-standard varieties or other languages and these non-standard varieties with their speakers are often negatively stereotyped as 'backward'. Note that popular culture and media often contribute to this process, as Mutsaers and Swanenberg study, mentioned above, demonstrated (see also Agha 2007 for a general discussion).

In response to this kind of marginalization local languages are often consciously made into, i.e. socially and politically constructed as objects of local pride and indices of local identity. Helped by old and new media, speakers of these local languages engage in projects of language conservation, codification, and revitalization. Many of these projects are funded by regional governments and legitimated by international conventions on the preservation of immaterial (or intangible) cultural heritage (cf. Perrino 2013 for an illuminating study of the Italian regional Veneto variety) Any such project, however, quickly turns prescriptive and normative which inevitably leaves local speakers who do not conform to the prescribed norms (doubly) marginalized. What we see here is in effect a new centre of power arising within the periphery.

Cornips, De Rooij and Stengs (2011, 2012) investigate how different actors (individual as well as collective actors) engage with these power dynamics and make use of linguistic resources in the formation of local identities. They demonstrate how processes of local identity formation are driven by power asymmetries between people living in the centre and periphery when people in the periphery make use of their heightened consciousness of local language(s) and indexically re-order them in relation to other (standard and/or prestige) varieties. The centre-periphery dynamics has

received far too little attention from both linguists and social scientists, while the power imbalance (both perceived and measured) between a dominant area and the rest of the country is a major catalyst in the formation of local identities throughout Europe. Moreover, the social significance of the centre-periphery dynamics can be identified not only at the national level but also, recursively, at 'lower' levels, within regions of the nation, and even within cities and even smaller local entities (cf. Eckert 2011; Gal and Irvine 1995).

Globalizing forces and advances in media technologies have made people in the periphery more than ever before aware of differences between themselves and those occupying the centre. Recent economic and demographic trends have marginalized inhabitants of peripheral regions even further within the nation state. Those areas suffer often from demographic 'shrinkage' and aging, with destructive effects on local social infrastructures: the closing of shops and pubs, and the decline of clubs and music bands. It is, therefore, important to investigate how people in peripheral areas and regions throughout Europe find ways to (re)shape and strengthen local identities in these times of rapid social change.

Questions that are important to address include: what are the effects of forces of linguistic unification and nation-state formation on local language use and ideologies? How is a 'peripheral' place imagined and constructed as different by its inhabitants and 'outsiders' and what is the role of old and new media in this process? Which linguistic resources are perceived as uniquely local, and are valued as quintessential features of local identities? What are the intertwined perceptions on local languages as threatened and treasured heritage, as vehicles of oral traditions and expressions, and as markers of identity? When does everyday language become a conscious performance of linguistic uniqueness? And in relation to which old and new language-ideological hierarchies?

Summarizing what we have surveyed so far: new forms of mobility and with that of global economic activity have sometimes profound effects on the sociolinguistic landscape and the sociolinguistic relations in groups in the periphery. They offer new kinds of economic opportunity in areas that are quite often economically marginalized, and the emblematic features of marginality – an imagined and cultivated form of unspoiled authenticity – is the very stuff that can be commodified. Thus, these new forms of economic activity result in new interventions and new positions for local cultural resources, including (local) language resources. They are often a factor of language survival, almost always an engine for language change, and also affect the repertoires of local speakers.

4 Conclusions

Let us by way of conclusion reiterate the main methodological argument we have developed in this paper. A study of globalization and mobility in the margins is important,

for it can 'balance the books' of a sociolinguistics of globalization by adding insights from places not usually or immediately identified as 'globalized' or 'superdiverse'. As to how such studies can proceed, we propose to focus on the specific, often partial levels of access to infrastructures of globalization that characterize the margins of the world system. The specific forms of access to such infrastructures – we focused on new technologies, new forms of economic activity and new forms of local identification – provide a precise diagnostic of what can and does happen in the margins, and how differences with what happens in more central places can be adequately explained.

It also takes care of the danger of a metropolitan bias in work on globalization. What is needed is a local description of available and accessible infrastructural resources, precisely balanced against broader translocal, global, forces and influences. No benchmarks, other than loosely informative ones, ought to be used. And it is from such an analysis of local conditions that we can understand local outcomes. We know that globalization infrastructures enable and sustain connections between scale-levels – they enable, concretely, a boy from rural Thailand to text with his relative in Germany; and they enable Parisian tourists to engage in township tourism in Soweto. Effects, consequently, need to be situated and appraised at the level of inter-scale mobility: does access to infrastructures of globalization generate inter-scale mobility for people in the margins? If so, which specific forms of mobility are possible and which remain closed? And: how come?

It is from considering factors of infrastructure and their effects on local socio-cultural economies that we will begin to understand critical factors of inequality and marginalization. The margins of the world system did not appear just like that: they have histories, presents and futures. Inter-scale mobility is part of the presents and the futures; it is vital that we manage to be specific and precise in understanding which futures it might offer.

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CHAPTER 2

‘I am not a qualified dialect rapper’: Constructing hip-hop authenticity in China

1 Introduction[1]

我不是一个称职的方言 raper	I’m not a qualified dialect rapper (line1)
我只是，把看到的东西全部编成 rap	I just take what I see to compose rap (line2)
一个沉迷颓废节奏的超级纯正哈 ber	Someone addicted to decadent rhythms, a super pure fool (line3)
更不是你们想象中拥有 superpower	Neither am I like what you imagine with superpower (line4)
我不是一个称职的恩施方言 raper	I’m not a qualified Enshi dialect rapper (line5)
我只是，用节奏和文字乱喊的小娃 er	I just scat in rhythms and words like a small kid (line6)
一个陶醉自我音乐的超级纯正哈 ber	Someone revels in their own music, a super pure fool (line7)
完全不需要听众给我竖起指姆 er	No need at all for the audiences to give me the thumbs-up (line8)

Figure 1: Extract from a rap song

The above are the opening stanzas of a rap song entitled ‘I am not a qualified dialect rapper’,[2] which is produced on the internet by a young man named Zeng Kun using his local language from Enshi, a small rural area in a remote part of Central-Western China. In geopolitical spaces like China where globalization is still a recent and emerging phenomenon, and where state-sponsored orders and norms of social and cultural practices are prominent in everyday life, it is remarkable to witness such an example of participation in the global transcultural flows (e.g. hip-hop) from the periphery of society, understood here in three ways. First, from China which is in many ways perceived to be in the periphery of the wider processes of globalization; then, from Enshi, being in a similar position within China; and finally, from its creator

[1] This chapter was first published as X. Wang (2012). ‘I am not a qualified dialect rapper’: Constructing hip-hop authenticity in China. *Sociolinguistic Studies* 6(2): 153–191.

[2] This song can be found at www.yyfc.com/play.aspx?reg_id=1927818andsong_id=3468151. All data in this paper were collected between December 2009 and October 2010 as part of my PhD research about sociolinguistic globalization in China, and involved ethnographic observations online and consequent fieldwork trips to China. Translations of data from Chinese to English in this paper are mine.

Zeng Kun who is a school dropout, an ex-offender and consequently an unemployed stay-at-home and a stigmatized individual stuck in a 'backward' place.

Clearly, the new technology of the internet and emerging forms of subculture enabled and facilitated by the internet – *wangluo fangyan xiha* (internet dialect hip-hop, an emerging subculture in China) in this case – can offer specific niches which present new possibilities for social and cultural practices, community formation and identity making, possibilities that are otherwise restricted or even unavailable to disenfranchised groups and grassroots people, such as Zeng Kun (see Varis, Wang and Du 2011, for a focused discussion about 'the Enshi rapper' and his online hip-hop activities), who are placed on the real margin with fewer social capitals at their disposal. Thus, what the rap song presents to us is a peripheral – in multiple senses of the word – but significant instance of sociolinguistic globalization, because it has brought together what is extremely global (hip-hop as a main hub and one of the most popular and diverse forms of cultural globalization, see e.g. Alim, Ibrahim and Pennycook 2009; Mitchell 2001; Terkourafi 2010) and extremely local (a rapper who is, socially as well as sociolinguistically, confined to a locality low on the social ladder and far away from the centres), and has created something new out of this. In this tension, a new cultural product is generated, and careful examinations of this new thing, the new product of hip-hop globalization, can reveal much about the dynamic interactions between the global and the local, and about the discursive processes of struggling to forge new meanings from the opportunities opened up by the forces of globalization.

However, to grasp the significance of the hip-hip of Enshi as suggested here is no easy task, and one of the first things we are confronted with is the issue of authenticity. In the two stanzas shown above which also serve to frame the whole song, we hear Zeng Kun repeatedly refer to himself and to his rap performance as 'not qualified', that is, not 'real', not 'true', not 'authentic'. In his 'shout-out', the rapper voices questions about *authenticity*, and marks them with certain features of language use:

a) the song is mainly in the rapper's local language, i.e. a peripheral variety of *fangyan/dialect*[3] particular to Enshi, rather than in the prestigious variety of *Putonghua*, the normative variety and lingua franca of Chinese, or English, globally deemed to be the code of hip-hop;
b) there appears inadequate incorporation of the hip-hop language of English – with only three words, 'raper', 'rap' and 'superpower' – which furthermore

[3] Discrepancies between 'fangyan' and 'dialect' (as between 'language' and 'dialect') are long-debated topics in Chinese linguistics (e.g. Bloomfield 1933; DeFrancis 1984; Norman 1988). In this paper, 'fangyan' and 'dialect' are treated as complementary terms and used conjointly, as fangyan/dialect, to underscore their sociolinguistic significance in relation to Putonghua, the normative variety of Chinese, and the 'monoglot ideology' (Silverstein 1996) Putonghua represents in Chinese society.

contain a substantial deviation: 'raper' instead of 'rapper', the latter being a household term in hip-hop jargon which should by now perhaps not be mistaken at all if one wants to claim a hip-hop identity; and

c) there are, in addition, what looks like unintelligible items 'er' and 'ber', with no readily observable links to either the Chinese or the English displayed in the lyrics; these seem random and make no apparent sense.

Already, we can see several reasons why the hip-hop of Enshi can be easily taken as a cumbersome patchwork of unwarranted and fragmented use of language, a cacophony of 'noises' that may not qualify as 'real' hip-hop, at least from the perspective of particular centres of norms.

What Zeng Kun problematizes through his creation of Enshi hip-hop is indeed the legitimacy of mainstream norms for the local scale, and he does this through a strong articulation of authenticity. This is particularly important for those who struggle to find ways to participate in global activities and to contest established meanings (such as social peripherality and stigma) from the local level. Although his rap embodies the embracing of hip-hop as an incoming instrument and resource which may allow Zeng Kun to do something new, free-willed and true to himself, 'authentic' so to speak, it also bespeaks immense constraints imposed on this freedom. The construction of authenticity is never entirely free from power and inequality, but always subjected to control and judgment from various centres where the dominant discourses about authenticity are produced.

As a consequence, the example illustrates 'disqualification', or 'misrecognition' (Bourdieu 2000) in two ways. First, Zeng Kun exposes these negative evaluations through linguistic (the peculiarity in his language use) and metalinguistic resources (the message in his lyrics). Second, some of these are the product of his peripheral position in China and the world. To this effect, one may argue that the language features of his rap are not at all messy or inauthentic; rather, its specific shape derives from the influence of an assemblage of layered and niched meaning systems, notably those of the local, from which Enshi hip-hop has to find its reference points for authenticity.

Hence, to address the issue of authenticity raised by the hip-hop of Enshi is essentially to address the sociolinguistic question about the ways in which language as *resource* with both referential and social (indexical) meanings is deployed by the rapper for constructing his (hip-hop) poetics of authenticity (cf. Hymes 1996; Blommaert 2005). On the one hand, this draws attention to 'the hip-hop ideology of authenticity' (Pennycook 2007a, 2007b), which is concerned with *what counts as 'real' hip-hop, who can claim hip-hop membership and how authenticity can be discursively achieved in this poetic genre* and so on. This framing of authenticity may be directed towards the phenomenon of hip-hop, but it is also inherently connected to wider issues about globalization in general, such as *how authenticity is related to the global/local dynamics, and how such relation may impact on our understandings of cul-*

tural ownership, cultural change, locality and identity. This has implications for how we conceptualize the notions of language and culture.

On the other hand, the sociolinguistic inquiry of authenticity can be split into two sets of different but interrelated questions, both of which are based on viewing authenticity as discourse. Since language is the focal point of a poetic analysis, it is necessary to deal with the language of Enshi hip-hop properly – to replace a simplistic, unproductive approach to textual structure with a much more sophisticated, critical one, and with a focus on the micro details of language features – for it is easy to dismiss these features as a distant voice, a not-so-clever mimicry of global hip-hop with bare minimum variation and apolitical consciousness, overlooking or neglecting the enormous language work that has been undertaken to (re)configure a specific kind of authenticity against the tremendous sociolinguistic constraints Enshi hip-hop is faced with. In fact, what we are observing is not a juxtaposition of static, abstract signs, but a mixture and hybridization of overlapping semiotic features that are:

a) normally associated with the named varieties of fangyan/dialect, Putonghua and English;
b) distributed in and blended together from different modes of communication (as captured by 'multimodality' [Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996] or 'transmodal performance' [Pennycook 2007a]), e.g. graphic, acoustic and stylistic, which are enabled and syncretized by the technology of the internet; and
c) attached to particular histories and social distinctions, that is, they are part of a layered, stratified meaning-system formed in a particular space over time.

This prompts questions such as: *How are language mixing and hybridity represented semiotically? How are the different modes of language welded into one ensemble to invent a local version of the global hip-hop genre? And how are these different modes related to one another in such work?* These may be small, specific questions of 'internal linguistics' in the Saussurean tradition, but are interwoven with external, broader questions such as: *In what ways is the language characteristic of Enshi hip-hop used for the purpose of claiming authenticity? What kind of authenticity is being claimed and played out? To what extent is this culturally consequential? And in what ways does this inform our existing understandings of language and culture?*

I have opened this paper empirically, with an instance of the local uptake of global hip-hop in Enshi in rural China. As we have seen, in order to account for this case as a phenomenon of globalization, we are confronted with a number of issues, the central one being the contestation of authenticity from the periphery in globalization processes. Attached to the issue of authenticity is a range of questions and concerns to do with language, culture and identity, both specific to the 'data', the textuality of Enshi hip-hop, and more generally, as an exercise of sociolinguistic and cultural interpretation of globalization. In Section 2, I provide a discussion about authenticity in hip-hop globalization in relation to the local and locality, and I suggest that the local

as context should be understood as a polycentric stratification (i.e. a system of multiple and hierarchical centres of authority, see Blommaert 2007a, 2007b), what can be called *orders of authenticity*, from which the meanings of authenticity emerge. This understanding compels us to start our analysis with an ethnographic investigation of the Chinese context of Enshi hip-hop (Section 3), which then offers an important diachronic perspective to the analysis of the synchronic textuality in the form of lyrics as shown at the beginning of the paper, and how the rapper manoeuvres discursively, in 'authentic' ways, from within his context to reach out to the global flows of hip-hop (Section 4). By way of conclusion (Section 5), I review in general terms issues related to language and identity arising from this investigation of authenticity in the context of globalization.

2 Authenticity, hip-hop globalization and the local context

Authenticity, or 'keepin' it real', is construed as the cultural mantra of hip-hop (Morgan 2005), and what gets spread in hip-hop globalization (to follow Pennycook 2007a, 2007b) is not 'a prior set of embedded languages or practices' (2007a: 14), but the ideology of authenticity. This involves a dialogic between how hip-hop is defined globally as a distinct cultural system and poetic genre, a 'global idiom' (Mitchell 2001) or 'supervernacular' (Blommaert 2011; Varis and Wang 2011; Velghe 2011), and locally according to the specific economy of meaning-making in which the rap act is produced and circulated. For Pennycook, it is important to recognize that *locality* plays a fundamental role in constituting what makes our communicative behaviours recognizable, thus 'real' (Pennycook 2010). In other words, keeping it real is, to a large extent, embedded in our local living environment and occupied with keeping it *local*, and, therefore, 'is better understood as a global ideology that is always pulled into local ways of being' (Pennycook 2007b: 112). This perception indicates that authenticity in hip-hop ought to be considered as a dynamic process of using what is local to reinterpret and appropriate the global, and 'performing multiple forms of realism within the fields of change and flow made possible by multiple language use' (Pennycook 2007a: 14). Global cultural forms such as hip-hop can best be understood as the result of the dialectic between 'englobalization' and 'deglobalization': forms that are made for global circulation are instantly captured by the local specifics of context (cf. Blommaert 2011). Consequently, local instances of hip-hop (including the one emerging online from Enshi) invariably result in highly heterogeneous and convoluted language practices that render the genre 'authentic', such as the diverse poetic and rhyming practices, in line with disparate local norms of language use and varied local socio-political agendas (e.g. Androutsopoulos and Scholz 2003; Lin 2009; Pennycook 2003; Sarkar and Winer 2006; Tsujimura and Davis 2009).

The emphasis on the local in the global spread of hip-hop authenticity brings to bear the cultural and sociolinguistic *context* at the local level, that is, the local ideologies and politics of language, culture and the local understanding of what 'keepin' it real' means. These ideologies 'envision and enact links of language to group and personal identity to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology' (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994: 55–56). Here, it is important to bear in mind Bauman and Briggs' (1990) argument that context does not refer to objective, discourse-external information about, and independent of, the text in question, what is often known as 'background'; rather, it consists of a multi-layered set of conditions *in* and *upon* which the text takes place and, as such, is an integral part of the analysis of this text. Put differently, context is not static or pre-given, but processual and dynamic, emergent in social interactions. Bauman and Briggs (1990: 68) propose to extend the theoretical approach to poetic analysis from context to contextualization in which 'features of the settings are used by interactants in producing interpretive frameworks.' What is also useful is Blommaert's (2001, 2005) critique about 'resources as context'. According to him, language is a complex of resources which are differentially distributed and socially consequential, and the way these resources feature in a particular discursive act is indexical of the way they are positioned in society, thus the meanings (e.g. of authenticity) they speak are always governed by the underlying social norms, or 'orders of indexicality'. In this sense, in contextualizing the local, 'an investigation into language becomes an investigation into the systems and patterns of allocation of power symbols and instruments, and thus an investigation into basic patterns of privilege and disenfranchisement in societies' (Blommaert 2005: 61).

The hip-hop of Enshi, as represented in the rap song that introduced this paper, offers an impressive illustration of the discursive production of authenticity in globalization processes and, as will surface later, demonstrates how culturally and sociolinguistically complex this is in rural China. To talk about authenticity in Enshi hip-hop, we must engage closely with the local context which, as suggested in the above discussion, offers us an interpretive framework in terms of *specific* resources with *specific* meanings about authenticity in a *specific* social space. This framework can be called *orders of authenticity*, in line with the notion of 'orders of indexicality' developed by Blommaert (2005) as a complement to what Silverstein (2003) terms 'indexical order'. 'Orders of authenticity' attempts to capture several aspects of the characteristics elementary to context in globalization processes. First, authenticity is always norm-governed, in accordance with ideologies at both the global and the local scale levels; hence, secondly, authenticity entails multi-layered, multi-scalar norms from different centres, and some may be competing or conflicting; thirdly, these norms are 'ordered', that is, they are not random but closely linked with other social features of the interaction and systematically produced; and finally, orders of authenticity are a dynamic construct that is emergent and negotiable in social actions.

If we bring these ideas about authenticity into our investigation of the local, we can see that local is, as a result of globalization, an increasingly polycentric and lay-

ered thing that is made up of complex orders of authenticity, crucially here the local political economy of language (which is related to and impacted on by the global orders). In this light, authenticity *also* involves manoeuvring in this complex environment in which meanings emerge out of the application (or disapplication) of certain orders of authenticity. So, for Enshi hip-hop, to inspect its authenticity we must first contextualize it and tell the story of how the orders of authenticity are constructed in its world; to consider the significance of the micro manoeuvres in its text, we must begin by accounting for the macro politico-linguistic structure or orders of authenticity in which its text is produced.

3 Orders of authenticity in China

As already mentioned, the repertoire of resources with which the hip-hop of Enshi is entextualized includes fangyan/dialect, Putonghua and English. These resources are varieties with *linguistic* as well as *social* distinctions, and together they frame the local context of Enshi hip-hop. But before we zoom into how the distinctions of these varieties sociolinguistically organize the orders of authenticity for Enshi hip-hop, some general observations can be made about authenticity with respect to hip-hop and Enshi hip-hop as a cultural phenomenon of globalization in China.

3.1 A 'shanzhai' culture

Since only a decade or so ago (e.g. Steele [2006] regards the year 2000 as a landmark of hip-hop in China), hip-hop has rapidly become a popular form of cultural practice that has attracted many young people across mainland China. Rap, the main component of hip-hop culture, has also entered China's local scene of popular music, although it faces challenges to become a 'real' part of social and cultural life. In China, hip-hop, rap in particular, is strongly associated with African American language and culture and is largely perceived as an importation from the (Anglophone) West. This creates two types of co-existing discourse about hip-hop. On the one hand, hip-hop is projected in the media and music industries as high fashion from the centre of globalization, something utterly trendy and 'cool' for urban youth (e.g. Fang 2007). On the other, hip-hop needs to be seen, by its own definition, as a form of resistance to hegemony (what Potter [1995] calls 'vernacular of resistance'). This, in the context of China, particularly Enshi, turns it against exactly its believed Western origin and exactly its mainstream urban image. It is, however, ironic that the spirit of resistance often has to be discursively achieved through hip-hop's own genre features, typically the 'bad' language with a 'bad' attitude, such as 'vulgar mouth' (*cukou*, see Lin 2009). These language features (together with the hip-hop stereotypes such as misogynism and 'blingism' often found in gangsta rap) in turn portray hip-hop as a subversive,

'garbage culture' from black ghettos (e.g. Liu 2005), which makes it difficult to admit hip-hop fully into the local mainstream that is heavily normed and institutionalized.

None of the above takes on hip-hop in China can offer much purchase for authenticity to the hip-hop of Enshi. Problematic is its reliance on the internet for democratic (even if only relatively speaking) musical resources and technology (e.g. digital sampling), production and circulation. The internet is indeed enabling and empowering, allowing the rapper to create a niche from within a society that is saturated with norms and rules. In this niche, he is able to engage creatively with the global flows of hip-hop without having to follow all of the norms and rules that are out there. But the internet also makes Enshi hip-hop extremely vulnerable in the sense that when this channel of knowledge and communication collapses, as it happens from time to time in China (e.g. Varis, Wang and Du 2011), the entire existence of Enshi hip-hop could be wiped out. This situation constitutes another aspect of the peripherality of Enshi hip-hop. It is the fact that it is practiced online, a heavily contested social space in China (e.g. Yang 2003), thus maximally bypassing the normative controls and authentications, that distances it from mainstream society and makes it difficult for Enshi hip-hop to claim cultural currency in Chinese society.

In fact, when I invited a young man[4] who is also from Enshi to listen to and comment on the rapper's music, he emphatically turned me down, explaining that he had no time for such *shanzhai* stuff. This is a significant remark because 'shanzhai' is a term explicitly about (in)authenticity and was born out of China's globalization processes. It originates from the classical Chinese novel *Water Margin* in which shanzhai was the fortress of the anti-reign outlaws. Recently, this word has taken on the new meaning to refer to the commercial production of imitations of technology goods made in China-based foreign outsourcing factories, and later on, became applicable to any cultural behaviour that is suspected of being unoriginal or copycat (see e.g. Wu 2010). The young man's labelling of Enshi hip-hop as a 'shanzhai' culture highlights how its authenticity is an easily questionable issue, to the point where it can be seen as emblematic of anti-authenticity, even in the eyes of someone who is (presumably) of the same speech community as the rapper. This perception is also an echo of the way the language resources used in Enshi hip-hop are socially authenticated, an issue to which I now turn.

3.2 Languages in China

Adopting Foucault's (2007) notion of 'police' and 'policing', Blommaert et al. (2009) use 'language policing' to describe the rationalized maintenance of a normatively organized order in multilingual societies by a range of actors (from state institutions, to civil or corporative organizations, down to individuals) in a number of European

[4] This happened in May 2010, in a series of Internet contacts with people from the rapper's community of Enshi who are his real or potential audiences.

settings. Through their observations, Blommaert et al. emphasize the 'polycentric' nature of norm production and reception (with nation-state being one of the actors), and 'the persistence of actors operating within established paradigms and structures of the modernist era in media and language policy, who are in turn challenged by these new actors and processes' (2009: 204). For Enshi hip-hop, these insights call for inspections of two distinct aspects of the mechanism of language policing: on the one hand, the increasing multiplicity and complexity in the (re)formation of the local order in the context of globalization and, on the other, the agentive processes of negotiating and (re)shaping this order by relevant actors. Both aspects are important in understanding authenticity in the case of Enshi hip-hop. Before addressing the latter aspect, this section focuses on the polycentric orders of authenticity emerging from the local context of Enshi hip-hop in China.

Like in European countries and elsewhere, language policing is also at work in contemporary China. China is an example of a 'monoglot' society (cf. Silverstein 1996) in which the language regime is strongly driven by language purism (e.g. C. Li 2004) that is not only monolingual but also *monoglossic*: 'a language-ideological stance of "purity" and "standard"' (Blommaert 2008: 68). The Chinese politics of language is reflected in a normative order revolving around Putonghua (e.g. Dong 2010) and is, in addition to the nationwide institutionalized campaign of Putonghua use, maintained and reinforced through interventions in the use of other language varieties, including all nonstandard Chinese varieties[5] collectively known as *fangyan/ dialect* and foreign languages that fall under the umbrella term *waiyu* (literally 'outside language[s]'). These interventions are, as we shall soon see, largely state-directed, and their aim is to keep the orderly, harmonized society envisaged by the government, including its language life.

These value attributions certainly have effects on how each language variety is (supposed to be) deployed and manifested in the Enshi hip-hop sample with which I opened this paper. It is intriguing, for instance, that to *look* at the lyrics (as writing), only certain language features are visible or recognizable to the eyes of a non-speaker of Enshi fangyan/dialect: it is presented predominantly in the standard Chinese, namely Putonghua, mixed with three items identifiable as (problematic) English (in lines 1, 2, 4 and 5) and some unusual-looking two- or three-letter combinations (in lines 3, 6, 7 and 8), whereas features of fangyan/dialect seem nowhere to be *seen*; they are mainly *heard* as vocal features. Notwithstanding that the concept of multimodality or transmodality can offer crucial insights for identifying which varieties, or which features of a variety, are represented through which channel of semiotic production. What the issue of '(in)visibility' in representation has brought to our attention is that, for one, there is differentiation in *how much* as well as *how* each variety is used, which are two different matters – *the regimentation of language as social*

[5] The issue of 'minority languages', i.e. languages of ethnic minorities in China, is outside the concern of this paper.

resources and *the distribution of language as linguistic resources among Chinese varieties* – in the local ecology of language, and, for another, these issues may reflect language innovation, in the sense that the rapper's language use does not follow the monoglot logic that languages are discrete, internally bounded entities and the use of a particular language involves using its system as a (pure) totality. In what follows, I will illustrate the complexity of these issues through a rich description, that is, contextualization, of the language situation in Chinese society, taking stock of recent practices, discourses and scholarly debates about languages (English, Putonghua and fangyan/dialect) in China.

3.2.1 English as an 'outside' language

English is arguably the core material for the study of 'HHLx (Hip-Hop Linguistics)' (Alim 2006) or hip-hop 'sociolinguistics' (Pennycook 2007a) and other contemporary supervernaculars. In the processes of (hip-hop) localization, what is often assumed to be an abstract system by the name of 'English' is placed within the local language economy and orders of authenticity and becomes, inevitably, destabilized and redefined as a different kind of system with local-specific social meanings (e.g. Higgins 2009). In China, even as the recognizable global code of hip-hop, English has to fit into the hierarchical language stratification that is centred upon the hegemony and power of normativity embodied in Putonghua. It is this ideological order that defines the orders of authenticity in Enshi hip-hop, and to show the order in which English can or 'ought to' be used, it seems more than pertinent to start with the story of 'Zhao C'.

In 2006, the local police bureau in Jiangxi Province refused to renew the identity card and *hukou* (household registration) of a young man named Zhao C (赵 C, see Figure 2) because the 'C' in his name was deemed by the officials as a use of English thus a breaching of rules.[6] The rules they referred to involve a number of recent changes in legislations on population management and citizenship in China in response to various social changes effectuated by the processes of globalization, but above all, the issuing of China's first national law on the standardization of language use in 2000: Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language[7] ('the Language Law' hereafter). This law serves as the latest central guidelines for maintaining the language regime by specifying when, where and how foreign language(s) and fangyan/dialect can be used as an exception to

[6] Extensive and steady media coverage of Zhao C's story can be found, for instance, from *Xinhua News* at https://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2008-06/10/content_8339299.htm (viewed on 29/7/2010) and *Jiangxi News* at http://www.jxnews.com.cn/xxrb/system/2009/02/27/011036436.shtml (viewed on 29/9/2010).

[7] An English version can be found at http://www.gov.cn/english/laws/2005-09/19/content_64906.htm (viewed on 12/10/2010).

Putonghua in civic life. This includes some explicit rules about the use of foreign languages (e.g. Articles 11, 12 and 13), with English being the *de facto* foreign language, and language use in naming practices in a range of domains (e.g. Articles 17, 18, 23 and 25).

Figure 2: Zhao C's identity card (*Beijing Youth Weekend*, 12 March 2009 issue)

To defend the name that he had been using since birth, Zhao C and his family took the matter to court. Their case was reported as the first lawsuit over personal names on the P. R. China's record. After three years of dispute, it ended with the Zhao's finally agreeing to a name change, namely to replace 'C' with something more 'appropriate' according to the officials and the Language Law. This story was given a high profile in the public media and provoked many heated discussions among people at different levels of society about tensions surrounding issues such as personal freedom, cultural morality and national order arising from rapid social changes in a globalizing China. 'Zhao C' can be taken as a signal of an increased tendency towards diversification in cultural practices in today's China, typified in the unconventional language use in personal names in seeking new identities.[8] The aspiration for non-uniformity, however, is met with a gradual tightening of state supervision as manifested in the issuing of more preventative regulations on language use in different domains in recent years. In addition to the Language Law of 2000, there are also, for example, the new specifications devised by the Ministry of Public Security in 2003 and 2007 which discard any unapproved language use in name registration procedures.

A major concern in the case of Zhao C is the status of English, which seems to be caught in a rather contradictory situation: its use is overtly regulated and controlled in state language policy, but at the same time, it is strongly promoted in China (e.g. Lo Bianco, Orton and Gao 2009). English is the image of internationalization and modernization, the channel to the outside world, and a much desired 'instrument and

[8] Chen U-You (陈 U 优), a baby born in Hubei Province in 2007, whose parents were told by the police to have her name changed in order to register her *hukou*, is another example of deconventionalization in personal names in China.

knowledge' that is 'allocated a prominent role in Chinese education, and therefore in Chinese society' (Lo Bianco 2009: 7). This is well summarized in an online post (see Figure 3) on *Baidu*, China's largest internet search engine and most visited website, by an anonymous person who answers a call for help with a public English speech about 'why Chinese people learn English'.[9]

Figure 3: 'Why Chinese people learn English'

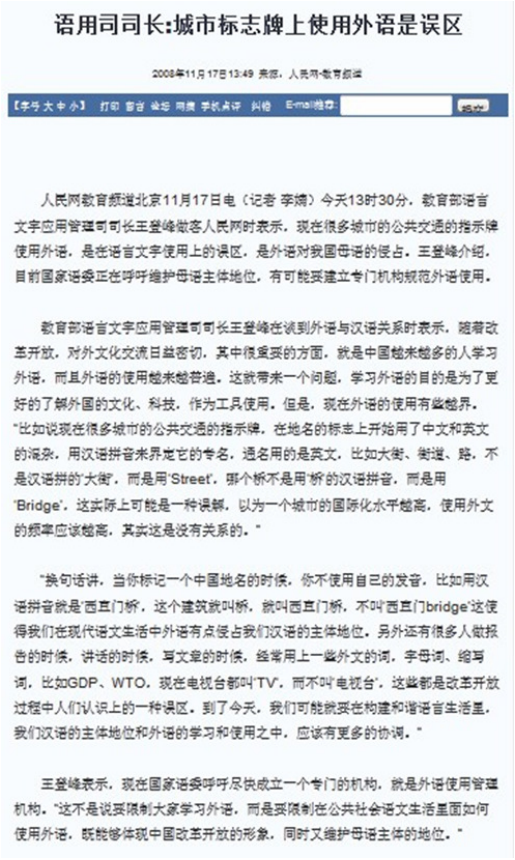
It is difficult not to spot the orthographic and grammatical 'accents' (i.e. deviations) in this text, as shown above, which is rather ironic because it is precisely these accented features that work against the very argument it tries to put across: people in China should learn English. Nevertheless, what is not obscured is the writer's voice emphasizing the great value and potential English stands for in China's development and globalization. Note that this post is marked with a flag as '最佳答案' (the best answer) and is given a thumbs up by seven people (see Figure 3). This voice is a clear recontextualization of the kind of discourses about English being a prestigious and elite resource that are widely circulated in Chinese society – the national 'quest' for English, as observed by Orton (2009). The name 'Zhao C' is one other reiteration of this quest, as the father explains that 'C' is an English letter which resembles his expectation for Zhao C to learn English well, and that 'C' is pronounced as 'xi' – the Chinese pronunciation of 西, the character that means 'the West' – an expression of his hope that one day his son can go and study in the West.[10]

On the other hand, English is also rejected for being an element of symbolic dominance of the Western powers that may threaten the purity of Chinese language and, by extension, the putative identity of being Chinese, a mentality that is driven by 'xenophobic purism' as described by C. Li (2004) and finds its expressions in people's

[9] http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/158040750.html?fr=qrlandcid=951andindex=2 (viewed on 15/9/2010).

[10] See a media interview with Zhao C's father, http://news.163.com/08/0606/11/4DOJ144S00011229.html (viewed on 30/9/2010).

reactions to the story of Zhao C. Many Chinese netizens criticize the use of 'C' for being a 'betrayal' of the Chinese language, a 'fetish' for foreign culture and a Chinese-English 'hybrid' that is invalid in either language.[11] Such attitudes towards the symbolic danger of English can be taken as reproductions of the monoglot, purist discourses that are currently in circulation, which are powerfully articulated in a remark about restraining English use in the public space by the Director of Language Planning and Administration Department in the Ministry of Education. In an interview[12] with *People's Daily*, China's top official newspaper, the Director points out that there is a surge in the mixed use of English and Chinese in the city public space, and he comments that:



语用司司长:城市标志牌上使用外语是误区

2008年11月17日13:49 来源：人民网-教育频道

【字号 大 中 小】 打印 留言 论坛 刊载 手机点评 纠错 E-mail推荐: 确定

人民网教育频道北京11月17日电（记者 李婧）今天13时30分，教育部语言文字应用管理司司长王登峰做客人民网时表示，现在很多城市的公共交通的指示牌使用外语，是在语言文字使用上的误区，是外语对我国母语的侵占。王登峰介绍，目前国家语委正在呼吁维护母语主体地位，有可能要建立专门机构规范外语使用。

教育部语言文字应用管理司司长王登峰在谈到外语与汉语关系时表示，随着改革开放，对外文化交流日益密切，其中很重要的方面，就是中国越来越多的人学习外语，而且外语的使用越来越普遍。这就带来一个问题，学习外语的目的是为了更好的了解外国的文化、科技，作为工具使用。但是，现在外语的使用有些越界。"比如说现在很多城市的公共交通的指示牌，在地名的标志上开始用了中文和英文的混杂，用汉语拼音来界定它的专名，通名用的是英文，比如大街、街道、路，不是汉语拼的'大街'，而是用'Street'，哪个桥不是用'桥'的汉语拼音，而是用'Bridge'，这实际上可能是一种误解，以为一个城市的国际化水平越高，使用外文的频率应该越高，其实这是没有关系的。"

"换句话讲，当你标记一个中国地名的时候，你不使用自己的发音，比如用汉语拼音就是'西直门桥'，这个建筑就叫桥，就叫西直门桥，不叫'西直门bridge'这使得我们在现代语文生活中外语有点侵占我们汉语的主体地位。另外还有很多人做报告的时候，讲话的时候，写文章的时候，经常用上一些外文的词，字母词、缩写词，比如GDP、WTO，现在电视台都叫'TV'，而不叫'电视台'，这些都是改革开放过程中人们认识上的一种误区。到了今天，我们可能就要在构建和谐语言生活里，我们汉语的主体地位和外语的学习和使用之中，应该有更多的协调。"

王登峰表示，现在国家语委呼吁尽快成立一个专门的机构，就是外语使用管理机构。"这不是说要限制大家学习外语，而是要限制在公共社会语文生活里面如何使用外语，既能够体现中国改革开放的形象，同时又维护母语主体的地位。"

[11] http://comment.news.163.com/news_shehui6_bbs/4DOJ144S00011229.html (viewed on 29/7/2010).

[12] http://edu.people.com.cn/GB/xiaoyuan/8352657.html (viewed on 15/9/2010). The translation shows the Director's remarks as quoted in the original news report. The emphases are mine.

> For example, the public traffic signs in many cities begin to use a mixture of Chinese and English for names of places. Chinese is used for the proper name, but the generic name is in English. Such as dajie (avenue), jiedao (street) or lu (road), what is used is not Chinese pinyin 'dajie' but 'street'. For So-and-so Bridge, what is used is not the Chinese pinyin 'qiao', but 'bridge'. This is perhaps a misunderstanding that the more internationalized a city is, the more frequently it should use foreign language. In fact, these two are unrelated.
>
> In other words, when you signpost a place in China, you are not using your own pronunciation. For example, it should be 'Xizhimen Qiao' in pinyin. The building is a qiao, therefore should be called Xizhimen Qiao, not 'Xizhimen Bridge'. *This shows that in our contemporary language life, foreign language is somewhat invading the subject position of our Chinese language*. Additionally, many people tend to include some foreign language words when they give a report, a speech or write a paper, including alphabetic words and acronym words, like television station is called 'TV' nowadays, not 'dianshi tai'. These are people's misperceptions in the processes of reforming and opening up. *Today, we should have more coordination in our construction of a harmonious language life and in protecting the subject position of our Chinese language while learning and using foreign languages*.
>
> This is not to restrict people's foreign language learning, but to restrict *how foreign languages are used* in *the language life in public society*, which not only projects an image of a reforming and opening-up China, but also retains the subject position of our mother tongue.

What is noticeable here, particularly against hybridity and diversity spurred on by globalization, is a vision of order strongly associated with the monoglot ideology and the modernist logic of 'one nation – one culture – one language'. As such, boundaries in language and identity must correspond with the national boundaries, formulated as a 'Chinese-*versus*-non-Chinese' dichotomy while othering foreign languages, typically English, as an 'outside' system that poses a threat to the purity and authority of Chinese. This is an institutionalized stance, and is rephrased in the slogan *protecting the purity of Chinese* and intertextualized in various domains of society. It can be found in a number of eminent activities currently, including the Beijing forum in early 2010 on 'regulating the practice in foreign language translation and building a harmonious language environment' with experts from academia and journalism, the 'cleansing' of English use in public signs in cities and major international event venues (e.g. the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 2010 Shanghai Expo and the 2014 Nanjing Youth Olympics, to name a few) and the recent controversial decision by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television to ban the use of English acronyms, triggering debates about whether China's central television station should abandon its own long-standing logo 'CCTV' (China Central Television).

It seems that English is a polycentric and ambivalent object in Chinese society, orienting towards different ideological centres and multiple orders of authenticity: one of internationalism and globalism on the supra-national scale where English is an asset and an 'upscaling' resource (something that offers more indexical values and upward mobility, see Blommaert 2007a), and one of nationalism and localism on the nation-state scale where English is not always privileged, or even proscribed to be a potentially corruptive influence culturally and morally. The conflictual discourses about English are a reflection of the tensions between the growing multilingual everyday reality and the monoglot ideology that seeks to maintain an abstract ideal of order in society. With China's globalizing processes intensifying and 'superdiversity' (cf. Vertovec 2006) effects prevalent, processes of language policing and homogenization are also becoming overwhelmingly salient and forceful. This is marked by the introduction of the 2000 Language Law and the subsequent legislations on language standardization, as mentioned earlier, which prescribe and limit the use of English and its sociolinguistic validity and authenticity.

The story of Zhao C offers a prime case in point for involving English use in a personal name – perhaps one's most important marker of identity – and persuasively reveals the omnipresence of the global flows of English in identity construction and globalization-induced local cultural transformation in China. However, these practices do not happen in an empty space. They are dominated by multiple and sometimes contradictory sets of norms and orders of authenticity in the use of English which, as we have seen, can be disregarded and invalidated by the authoritative forces for being an 'outside' language. The power of these forces, as Zhao C's case indicates, is extending to the private sphere, impacting on individual language users' access to possibilities and choices.

To return to Zhao C, allegedly the first Chinese person to be penalized for using English in his personal name, we may observe a further layer of complexity in how English really works in this particular case if we place his conduct in the broader context of globalization. It is only part of the explanation that 'C' is an English letter but should be pronounced as 'xi', the Chinese word for 'the West'. For Zhao C's father, 'C' also stands for the initial letter of 'China' in English, as a way of reminding Zhao C of his Chinese identity even if he were to go and study in the West. Adding up these meanings, 'C' is a case of what Bakhtin (1981) calls 'multivocality': one voice tells an aspiration for upward mobility and alternative cultural affiliation (in addition to being Chinese), one amplifies the awareness of the putative national and ethnic identity (of being Chinese) and one expresses a change of age-old tradition of naming practice in Chinese culture. Therefore, instead of being the extrinsic emblem of an 'imagined' identity visible in the English pseudonyms common among Chinese people (e.g. Gao, Xiu and Kuang 2010), 'C', in both its sound and meaning, has become detached from its global system of English and turned into a localized item, 'deglobalized' so to speak (see Blommaert 2011), entering Zhao C's repertoire at the local level as a concretized capital he can use for claiming multiple and expanded identities. This sug-

gests that, for Zhao C, English is no longer an outside language, but has become an intimate insider of his identity repertoire. In fact, we could even go one step further to suggest that the English origin of 'C' has changed and has become localized as Chinese through indigenization or 'semiotic reconstruction' (Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Pennycook 2003).

Zhao C's story is therefore one about how social changes may afford new resources that can be appropriated and authenticated by local actors. Along this line, 'Zhao C' is better understood as an innovated Chinese name than as a Chinese-English hybrid. The localization processes are multidirectional and coalescent rather than linear and internally coherent, converging sometimes oppositional social values and beliefs, namely orders of authenticity, about English, in this case via a single letter 'C'. What this illustrates is that individual authenticity in language use is evaluated with reference to local norms. Authenticity is, thus, both a matter of individual agency and of social norms.

3.2.2 The struggling fangyan/dialect

In hip-hop globalization, local languages play an indispensable role in the construction of authenticity (Pennycook 2007b). Some instances of the local uptake of hip-hop flows even opt for complete linguistic localization, excluding the use of English altogether to maximize the sociolinguistic role of the local language (such as the Finnish Sami rap by Amoc, see e.g. Leppänen and Pietikäinen 2010). This is the case with many examples of *wangluo fangyan xiha* (internet dialect hip-hop) in China that is emerging and circulating on the internet, such as rap music by X-Xiao-X (Kunming), Liumang Tu (Wuhan) and Emperor Qinshihuang's Accent (Xi'an). Their participation in hip-hop as a new global phenomenon and their choice of the local fangyan/dialect make these rap groups visible as the manifestation of local involvement from within China in global popular music and culture. Their works bear the recognizable feature of locality through the emblematic use of their local languages, but – because of the use of fangyan/dialect – also of *egao* or Kuso culture which is 'an internet subculture that deconstructs serious literature or artistic materials to entertain people' (Meng 2009: 53). That is to say, it can be socially questionable whether fangyan/dialect is an authentic resource for 'serious' forms of culture, including hip-hop. In the case of Enshi hip-hop, it is interesting that Zeng Kun frequently labels his rap (and pop songs) in the local language as *egao* (or *gaoxiao*, 'camp') in his web space where his music creations are published, implying his self-awareness of the non-seriousness and anti-normativity in using fangyan/dialect.

These observations indicate that the order in which fangyan/dialect operates in China, similar to that of English, also entails multiple layers of norms and rules. This order, however, has to be connected to the long sociocultural and epistemological historicity of language in China. Two aspects are most relevant to what I later have to say about the authenticity of Enshi hip-hop in relation to the questions of *how much*

and *how* the resource of fangyan/dialect is used (see Section 3.2 above). One considers the social positioning of fangyan/dialect, its regimentation as a social resource, especially in the context of China's globalization. The other addresses the specific issue of Chinese fangyan/dialect's lack of writing or literacy resources, namely, the distribution of fangyan/dialect as linguistic resources, which, I suggest, persistently restricts its representation and validity in society.

Millennia of social and cultural mixing, integration and evolvement in China have cultivated the continuum of diglossia we see today (e.g. You 2006), with a social divide of statuses between Putonghua (the national standard variety) and fangyan/dialect (all other varieties of Chinese). The normativity surrounding Putonghua largely results from decades of systematic institutional standardization since China's gradual transition from a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country to the establishment of the People's Republic, inheriting the historical discourse of 'lingua franca' Chinese (e.g. Su 1998) and the modernist ideology about the sharedness of language as constitutive of the nation-state (e.g. Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm 1986). Although linguistically the notion of 'fangyan/dialect' in Chinese is challenged by the typically western measurement of 'mutual intelligibility' (a criteria that is often used with reference to the unintelligibility between Cantonese and Mandarin; e.g. Bloomfield 1933; DeFrancis 1984; Norman 1988), in contemporary China it is better taken as a sociolinguistic marker, constructed in contrast to the normativity of Putonghua.

Processes that impact on the authenticity and validity of fangyan/dialect use operate from various directions in Chinese society, demonstrating highly polycentric features. In nation-state building, institutional imposition is hugely advantageous for the supremacy of Putonghua, promulgating it as the standardized, and therefore *standard*, code with an established orthography system, a normative grammar and a superposed register, and compared to which 'non-standard ones do not quite seem to be "real" languages' (Silverstein 1996: 286). The 'enregisterment' (cf. Agha 2007), that is, the standardization process of Putonghua also instils misrecognition of fangyan/dialect use as merely regional and local, and therefore minor and individual, which is overlaid by the uniformity and collectiveness of identity that is represented by Putonghua (Dong 2010). The 2000 Language Law (e.g. Article 16) officially sets the tone for the subordinate roles of fangyan/dialect in public social life at the nation-state scale level.

In terms of being a resource for cultural practices and traditions, fangyan/dialect use is often associated with the *su* (俗) culture and entails rather oppositional tenors. For one, *su* suggests ordinary, non-elite or even vulgar, as opposed to *ya* (雅), the exquisite, correct and normative. This contrast can trace its origins back to Confucian times and is still an important term for describing norms of Classical Chinese culturally as well as linguistically (see e.g. Lin 1998). Thus fangyan/dialect as *su*, on a regional-local scale, bears a historical disposition of the unrefined and the grassroots, which makes it culturally inauthentic for performing 'serious' literature or artistic work, such as lyrics in modern music. In the same breath, fangyan/dialect is also be-

lieved to be the embodiment of local traditions and customs, crystalized in forms of traditional regional oral performances such as operas, folklores and comedy shows. These art forms are often taken together as the essence of the totality of Chinese cultures, invoking nostalgia, universalism and sharedness of Chinese history and cultural heritage both within and outside the state borders. In this respect, fangyan/dialect use points to well-sedimented, refined and representative cultural practices, that is, the truest of the greater Chinese identity, as can be seen in the fangyan/dialect performances in the annual gala show in celebration of a common Chinese New Year. Hence, with fangyan/dialect, another type of authenticity is allowed and in operation on a more specific, niched-scale level associated with history, tradition and locality.

These multiple and conflicting beliefs about fangyan/dialect are faced with new challenges. The new media and consumerism accompanying globalization in China have opened up space for burgeoning new forms of dialectal narrations, including literature, films, TV programs and popular art. This is in addition to the already diverse forms of regional culture and folk art, and is represented by, for example, the emergence of *haipai qingkou*, or Shanghai Clean Mouth (contrasting to 'vulgar mouth'), a new genre of Chinese stand-up comedy show which is created recently by the Shanghai comedian Zhou Libo and performed predominantly in Shanghainese with some use of Putonghua (see Luo 2009). A similar pattern can be found in *wangluo fangyan* xiha (internet dialect hip-hop), sprouting on the internet from disparate fangyan/dialect communities, such as those mentioned earlier. While some argue that globalization may have 'disenchanted' the cultural diversity and local characteristics fangyan/dialect expresses and turned it into a convenient ingredient for the production of formulaic, cheap entertainment for en masse consumption (Cai and Yu 2004), others detect a 'resurrection of Dialect Discourse' (Shao and Pan 2005) in a media era in which fangyan/dialect practices are moving gradually 'from the margin to the centre' of China's discourse regime and cultural map, to areas that were previously dominated by Putonghua (Wang 2007).

But, for fangyan/dialect, acquiring new social values and new forms of authenticity in new conditions (e.g. as a resource for new forms of mass culture) does not bypass the ideologies that are instigated from the higher scale level of the nation-state, which side with a 'harmonious' social order based on the patriotic principle of *yu-tong-yin*, *shu-tong-wen* (literally 'speaking in the same sound, and writing in the same script', i.e. using a unified spoken and written form of language), and within which discourses of language right, loyalty, endangerment and protection related to fangyan/dialect can be produced (e.g. Y. Li 2004, 2005; Su 1998; Wang 2006; Yang 2001). In finding a compromise for the tensions between fangyan/dialect and Putonghua, many emphasize that the lingua franca function of the latter induces a 'natural', 'harmonious' labour division of the two (e.g. You 2006), and that the rise of the former may pose obstacles to 'people's access to elite and serious culture' and 'the urbanization processes'. Consequently, its protection must be 'confined to cer-

tain group and via certain forms', like antique objects which need to be preserved in a museum rather than used in everyday life (Zhao 2006: 16).

In such orders of authenticity, fangyan/dialect practices are under increasing pressure of shrinking. This is becoming more apparent with China's intensive urbanization and internal migration (e.g. Lei and Van den Berg 2009; Xu and Van den Berg 2009). Not only is the shrinking manifested in the decrease of the number of speakers or the size of speech communities, but also, more importantly, in the reduction of its sociolinguistic capacity and *repertoire* – the range of functions, conditions and associated values of language use (Blommaert 2005; Blommaert and Backus 2011). For example, poetry and (modern) music lyrics would only be seen as 'serious' or 'proper' when produced in the normative variety, so is news broadcasting. In disapproving of fangyan/dialect news broadcasting, an emerging genre in local TV broadcasting, Shao and Wen Li (2004) state the following:

a) It (fangyan/dialect use) violates the national Language Law;
b) It attenuates the role of mass media as an exemplary model of language use;
c) Its narrow take on 'focus group' in media and communications causes ethnic discrimination and community disintegration;
d) Its limited perspective of regional culture distances from and denies identification with the country and nation;
e) It brings into question the sense of historic duty and social responsibility.

The above opinions explicitly enunciate the hegemony of the monoglot ideology, something that can, in fact, be found in many multilingual societies including America (Crawford 2000), Britain (Ager 2003) and other countries in Europe (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2009; Extra, Spotti and Van Avermaet 2009). These opinions spell out that the place for fangyan/dialect in society is predominantly confined to private spheres, and only for certain functions in certain niches in public spheres (e.g. in the context of state-ratified folklore), using the Language Law as a yardstick; outside these spheres, non-use of Putonghua could be seen as a transgression of norms and run into trouble. Uttered from the perspective of academics and intellectuals, this sounds particularly authoritative, reinforcing the power of state centralism and nationalism over language policy making, leaving little room for the social validity, and thus authenticity, of fangyan/dialect use. In contrast, the voice of a fangyan/dialect speaker seems vulnerable and helpless:


我系广州人,我手机响铃是"五星红旗",彩铃是"我爱你中国",我的QQ名是"热血",签名是"热爱祖国",我的车贴着三面中国国旗,我的家每年国庆高竖国旗七天(QQ138661105相册为证),我老婆叫阿华,我孩子想留学,我要求她学成后一定要回来报效祖国,我会说普通话,我爱祖国!如果连家乡话都没了,我真的不知怎么办?2010-07-29

我系广州人,我手机响铃是"五星红旗",彩铃是"我爱你中国",我的QQ名是"热血",签名是"热爱祖国",我的车贴着三面中国国旗,我的家每年国庆高竖国旗七天(QQ138661105相册为证),我老婆叫阿华,我孩子想留学,我要求她学成后一定要回来报效祖国,我会说普通话,我爱祖国!如果连家乡话都没了,我真的不知怎么办?2010-07-29

我系广州人,我手机响铃是"五星红旗",彩铃是"我爱你中国",我的QQ名是"热血",签名是"热爱祖国",我的车贴着三面中国国旗,我的家每年国庆高竖国旗七天(QQ138661105相册为证),我老婆叫阿华,我孩子想留学,我要求她学成后一定要回来报效祖国,我会说普通话,我爱祖国!如果连家乡话都没了,我真的不知怎么办?2010-07-29

I am [in a borrowed character that indicates the Cantonese pronunciation of 'am'] from Guangzhou, my mobile phone's ringtone is 'Five-Star Red Flag' [i.e. the Chinese national flag], the colour ringtone [the caller ring back tone which can be personalized] is 'I love you China', my QQ [China's most popular instant messaging computer program] username is 'Hot Blood' [patriotic enthusiasm], signature is 'love motherland', my car has three stickers of the Chinese national flag, my home erects the national flag for seven days every National Day (evidenced in my personal photo albums at QQ138661105), my wife [in the vernacular form, similar to 'old woman'] is called A-Hua, my child wants to study abroad, I require her to return after completing her study to serve the motherland, I can speak Putonghua, I love the motherland! If there is not even home language, I really don't know what to do? 29 July 2010.

This is an online post[13] from July 2010 in reaction to the news report 'Hundreds parade in Guangzhou "supporting Cantonese" and against the government promotion of Putonghua'. Earlier in the year, several rallies took place in Guangzhou – the capital city of Guangdong Province where Cantonese, one of China's largest fangyan/dialect groups (for some an entirely different language), is spoken – enraged by a proposal to change the local peak-time news broadcasting from Cantonese to Putonghua in view of Guangdong's hosting the 2010 Asian Games, so as to 'create a good language environment and good conditions for the Asian Games.'[14] Although exactly how the rallies were first started is unclear, it requires no explanation to see in this online post that fangyan/dialect speakers are feeling the pressure from Putonghua and the necessity to speak up for what they see as their language right (we can assume this anxiety also by the fact that this post was sent three times consecutively in response to the news report). Similar concerns about fangyan/dialect

[13] From the overseas Chinese paper *European Times* (Nouvelles d'Europe), http://www.oushinet.com/172-546-80944.xhtml (viewed on 1/10/2010). The remarks in the square brackets inserted in the translation are my own comments.

[14] From 'Thousands in Guangzhou Street "Protecting Cantonese"', a news report from 26 July 2010 by China's *Caijing Magazine*.

can also be seen in Shanghai where the need to 'protect Shanghai fangyan' was persistently raised to the government by the local members of the Political Consultation Conference and, then, by representatives of People's Congress in 2005, 2008 and 2009.

The proposed replacement of fangyan/dialect with Putonghua in news broadcasting is one manifestation of the ideology of keeping public 'verbal hygiene' (the sanitization of language use, see Cameron 1995) and order, similar to the monitoring of English use discussed earlier, targeting key locales as well as the media. In such sanitizing projects, if English is treated as an outside 'invasion' of the purity of Chinese (as discussed earlier), fangyan/dialect would be 'spoiling the good language environment'. Its use in news broadcasting transgresses its norm-based sociolinguistic repertoire, and is perceived as a deviation from the language orthodoxy about what is 'appropriate', 'good' and 'real'. This view is disseminated through the authoritarian media (especially through TV news broadcasting), emblematized in and accessed via Putonghua.

The Cantonese speaker's post also plays out authenticity in complex ways on a micro-level. Although the author states that he can speak Putonghua, he clearly chooses to speak in his fangyan/dialect, as indicated in his deliberate use of the non-standard form for two words (underlined in the above text). These words flag or index his personal identity as being a Cantonese speaker, declared in the first line, while giving him a voice with which to question and resist the marginalization of this identity. But, ironically, the legitimacy of this voice itself becomes problematic by the very fact of using fangyan/dialect (i.e. Cantonese), which lacks social legitimacy when used next to Putonghua, hence he compensates by stressing his sincerity and realness through providing personal details, such as his QQ number, and through discussing family members.

What can be observed here raises another, more fundamental question about authenticity: What makes someone a 'real' Chinese? It seems that paying all these tributes to his national identity (as indicated in his self-proclaimed behaviour of displaying patriotic words and items as a personal identity, or teaching his child about national loyalty), including speaking Putonghua, is not enough; all these have to be done from within a certain order, an order within which he must accept the lack of authenticity of Cantonese, a fangyan/dialect he sees as his 'home language' and an important index of his Chinese identity that is *systemically* prevailed over by the uniformity and homogeneity of another layer of his Chinese identity represented in Putonghua (see Dong's [2009] discussion of migrant identity for a comparable argument).

There is, however, a more inherent impediment that contributes to fangyan/dialect's low social prestige: its lack of written resources as social representation. This is akin to language situations elsewhere in which the orthographic norms mostly ignore the spoken varieties, as seen, for example, in standard Dutch of which the written form does not attend to regional Flemish or Limburg accents. With Chinese, howev-

er, the written underrepresentation of fangyan/dialect is much more serious, a crucial point that is not always addressed in discussions about Chinese sociolinguistics, but is highly relevant for the case of Enshi hip-hop in terms of the unevenly distributed linguistic resources between Putonghua and fangyan/dialect.

Most Chinese linguistic literature tends to classify the seven geographical branches of Chinese as 'fangyan' (Mandarin, including Northern and Southern Mandarin, and the other Southern dialects of Wu, Cantonese, Min, Hakka, Xiang and Gan) in terms of their spoken features and differences. Debates about whether these varieties should be classified as separate languages or dialects of the same language also stress their speech differences or mutual unintelligibility, arguing that the differences between, for instance, Cantonese and Mandarin, are no smaller than between two European languages, say, Dutch and English (see e.g. Bloomfield 1933; DeFrancis 1984; Norman 1988).

A fundamental reason that these rather distant speech forms are all recognized as one language under the label 'Chinese' has to do with their unified written code. It is widely observed that Hanzi (the script of the language of Han, the majority ethnic group of China, i.e. Chinese characters) is instrumental to and symbolic of China's political and cultural unity. Via Hanzi, members of different fangyan/dialect speech communities are tied to the same cultural and historical heritage and, more importantly, a common language, since people can communicate with one another via Hanzi regardless of their speech differences (see e.g. Norman 1988; Sun 2006; Ye and Xu 1981; You 1993). Chen (1996: 226) contends further that 'it is not the Chinese characters per se, but the specific type of written Chinese encoded in the script that plays such a role.' He refers to the literacy of contemporary Chinese as 'Modern Written Chinese', a writing system that is mainly based on the lexical and grammatical norms of Northern Mandarin, typically of Putonghua, and offers little representation of the indigenous vernaculars of the other fangyan/dialects (Chen 1993, 1996, 1999). Hence, writing in Chinese is about writing in a uniformed system of Hanzi and a superimposed normative register from the specific variety of Northern Mandarin which puts its non-native speakers at a disadvantage. As Chen (1996: 226) asserts,

> As long as speakers of Southern dialects look to Northern Mandarin instead of to their own vernacular for the standard in the written medium of communication, the Southern dialects will remain underdeveloped dialects unless and until standardized writing systems for each dialect have been developed that are extensively used by the community for all functions expected of a bona-fide written language.

Although 'dialect writing' is possible when resorting to strategies such as borrowing, inventing or Latinization, fangyan/dialects remain *underdeveloped languages* due to various constraints (Chen 1996). Technically, since characters are units with individual phonological/acoustic, orthographic/visual and semantic/denotational proper-

ties, borrowing and inventing can easily cause confusion and 'produce texts that are largely unintelligible to outsiders, much in the same way as the spoken correspondents' (1996: 226). Latinization, or the phonetic writing, has also evolved into the highly normalized system of *pinyin*, which is again designed around the phonological features of Northern Mandarin and Putonghua, and is therefore not well equipped to encode fangyan/dialects. Socially, even for fangyan/dialects with a literary tradition, notably Cantonese, Wu and Min, dialect writing is confined to specific cultural functions only, 'such as records of folk drama scripts, folk songs, stories and other literary genres that approach vernacular speech'; beyond these functions, dialect writing 'is generally held to be low in prestige, often appealing to dubious taste rather than being appropriate for more formal purposes' (1996: 227). With the implementation of the Language Law in 2000, both character and phonetic systems are further codified and standardized (e.g. Articles 17 and 18), making non-standard use of Hanzi and pinyin, such as borrowing, inventing and unconventional Latinization, illegitimate in public. Consequently, writing in fangyan/dialect becomes even less possible as well as less socially acceptable.

In summary, what the above discussions reveal are the multifaceted practices and discourses about English, fangyan/dialect and Putonghua that are prevalent in Chinese society. Together they contribute to the complex picture of a normative, polycentric environment in which the socio-cultural meanings and 'perceived appropriateness criteria' (Blommaert 2007a: 118) of each of the language varieties are produced. As we have seen, these meanings and criteria are multi-layered, heterogeneous and conflicting at times; they in turn produce a complex structure of orders of authenticity in which the component resources of Enshi hip-hop occupy unequal statuses in terms of their cultural meaningfulness and social validity. The authenticity of these resources, or lack thereof, present both opportunities and obstacles for the creation of Enshi hip-hop and its multiple claims of authenticity. To keep it real, the rapper has to be careful and skilful in working with this structure, not by simply conforming to it, but, as we shall see next, by creatively engaging with it for his own purposes.

This is where agency comes into play in globalization processes in which the internet opens up new social spaces for new actors, such as the rapper, to play a part in (symbolically) co-constructing the orders of authenticity through his language use.

4 An unqualified rapper

Let us now take a look at how the rapper engages with the polycentric orders of authenticity for constructing what he believes to be authentic, focusing closely on the lyrics shown at the beginning of this paper. In this tiny stretch of text that lasts for no longer than 30 seconds, intricate and dense shifting between and mixing of semiotic resources can be found, such as phonological/acoustic features, orthographic/

visual effects, linguistic registers and music styles and so on, all of which work together simultaneously in this one single hip-hop act. It is thus a transmodal stylization and discursive performance. To dissect how the rapper assembles language resources requires a micro-variation analysis that examines what microscopic manoeuvres in the various modes of communication are made as outcomes of the language politics (as outlined above), and how they are creatively compounded into a localized genre of hip-hop. This exercise is therefore a transmodal discourse analysis rather than the type of text-lyrics analysis that occupies much of hip-hop linguistics; and as a result, the scope of the data in this study becomes far more than just a piece of written text. The analysis of the micro features in language use reveals powerful indexical meanings that connect discourse with macro contexts and cultural patterns, which point to authenticity and identity claims based on the conformation or the transgression of norms and orders of authenticity. This will provide clues to the 'internal' (data-based, text-specific) and 'external' (broader concerns about culture or society) linguistic questions about Enshi hip-hop asked in the introductory part of the paper.

For analytical purposes, it is necessary to fix the momentary instance of intensive and multi-layered language hybridity and mixing in its observable textuality, by temporarily treating the rapper's language use as an artefact, a collection of tangible, stable pieces of language use in terms of modes and features. This allows a degree of describability as well as clarity. It is equally crucial to examine the interrelatedness of these fragments and the concerted meanings and effects they offer in achieving a sense of authenticity. This is the main task in what follows, and I set off with the immediately detectable elements in writing, while linking it back and forth to other modes and forms of language use. Graphically, the lyrics are primarily encoded in Hanzi, that is, standard (simplified) Chinese characters, though each line contains minimal but striking use of Latin scripts, with some English words ('raper', 'rap' and 'superpower') in lines 1, 2, 4 and 5, and some letter-combinations ('er' and 'ber') in lines 3, 6, 7 and 8. At first glance, what appears to be the case is that the rapper largely abides by the state-prescribed norm of using the standard Chinese variety, with only minor deviations in the use of 'foreign', namely Latin script to indicate orientations towards the global authenticity of hip-hop as an imported cultural form. But none of this really holds if we look deeper into how very different features, tied to very different orders of authenticity, reside together in these instances of language use. In other words, each manoeuver made by the rapper is a form of language mixing as well as of indexical mixing. Each use is loaded with multiples meanings of authenticity and is not neutral. Let us first turn to the use of Latin scripts.

The insertion of English into Chinese sentences indeed declares a move away from the normative order of English as an outside language. The choice of the English

words here, 'raper', 'rap' and 'superpower',[15] although minimal, are iconic of the hip-hop authenticity on the global scale, indexing the globality embodied in English as an international language and hip-hop's perceived English origin. However, the nonstandard spelling of 'raper' (instead of 'rapper'), the heavily accented pronunciation of the three words (as 'rwaaper', 'rwaapu' and 'super-pouer', respectively) and their embedded use in sentences that are constructed in Chinese, all suggest that these words are rendered with strong Chinicized, i.e. local, features, in sound, shape and meaning. They are indigenized or localized items of English. In this process of localization, the rapper strongly emphasizes authenticity on the local scale while making two moves: he is making authenticity claims available on both the global and the local scales; meanwhile, he is arguing for creatively engaging the local as authenticity by dismissing the idea of hip-hop as an imported global object, as he laments in another rap song called 'I just wanna rap'[16] 'not just black man's music that can rap, not just English that can rap, in fangyan and kuso I also rap, in blunders and nonsense I also rap.' Nevertheless, it is exactly this seemingly insignificant use of English words that is dismissed by the norms about purity and validity which disallow the Chinese-English 'hybrid' as well as 'improper' displays of English, much like the case of 'Zhao C' discussed earlier. Effectively, the English use here is a rejection of the orders of authenticity on the nation-state scale that tend to treat English as an outside language.

The other type of script mixing observable is the letter-combinations of 'ber' and 'er'. It is less transparent as to what they stand for unless we take into account what can be heard of the song. Once we shift from the visual to the auditory mode, the whole of the data presented here can be described as fangyan/dialect practice, as it is performed acoustically in distinct Enshi accents and phonological features. Rather than autonomous units, 'ber' and 'er' are in fact constitutive components of the lexical items from the local fangyan/dialect '哈 ber' (fool), '小娃 er' (small kid) and '指姆 er' (finger or thumb). Several features of mixing (in forms and meanings of authenticity) are simultaneously at work here, including Latinization, and I will analyse these one by one.

Acoustically, the lines are performed in the local fangyan/dialect, but in the formal, literary register and style that belong to the standard variety typified by Putonghua. This kind of hybridity shares a resemblance with 'Plastic Putonghua' ('plastic' in the sense of impurity, see e.g. Wu 2008) or what is commonly known as 'fangyan Putonghua' (Putonghua tinted by fangyan/dialect features), in which two types of fangyan/dialect phonological applications in speech are recognized: *baidu* (白读, plain or unadorned reading) and *wendu* (文读, literary reading). 'Baidu' means the

[15] The rapper reveals in his interviews with me that he became acquainted with the word 'superpower' via Hollywood films online, which for him resonates with the word 'superstar' in the entertainment industry.

[16] This song can be found at www.yyfc.com/play.aspx?reg_id=1927818andsong_ id=3540227

actual pronunciation of the local vernacular, while 'wendu' refers to assimilation by fangyan/dialect within its own phonological range, through the use of certain phonetic features of the standard variety (see e.g. Xu 2004). The differentiation of the two centres on the register and stylistic shifting between fangyan/dialect and the standard variety, with 'wendu' often taken as *yahua* (雅化, refinement) of fangyan/dialect, resulting in a hybrid form (Plastic Putonghua) when fangyan/dialect is drawn towards the more prestigious normative variety during one's acquisition of Putonghua.

While Plastic Putonghua focuses on the impurity in Putonghua's pronunciation as a result of fangyan/dialect's influence, the mixing of the two in Enshi hip-hop seems another story. Instead of upscaling (or *yahua*) the local dialect, as is often the case with fangyan/dialect due to its low social status, the rapper appears to be superimposing the phonological features that belong to Enshi fangyan/ dialect onto texts in a genre (here a poetic, literary genre) that falls outside of fangyan/dialect's usual sociolinguistic repertoire. Hence it can be argued that the use of Plastic Putonghua here is an instance of downscaling and localizing Putonghua, with an emphasis on the use of local language resources as hip-hop authenticity. It is a polycentric manoeuvre that orients towards the global (hip-hop), the local (Enshi fangyan/dialect) and the national (Putonghua) scales at the same time, while essentially defying the normativity of Putonghua.

But this is not yet the full story, for much of it still lies in the use of the words '哈 ber', '小娃 er' and '指姆 er'. As explained previously, these are words specific to the local vernacular of Enshi. Their use again contains multiple layers of mixing. First, they index the strict locality of Enshi, ascertaining the local as the real in the hip-hop ideology of authenticity. Their juxtaposition with the standard, literary style of language use in the rest of the sentence creates a mismatch and hybridity, strongly suggesting the rapper's intentional disapplication of the normative variety, whereby a process of appropriation and localization of the meaning of authenticity on the nation-state scale is taking place. Secondly, there is an evident deviation of the orthographic norms in these words where the rapper opts for the Latin script instead of Hanzi. This is related to the issue of fangyan/dialect's lacking of written resources discussed in the previous section. Whereas the rapper confidently inscribes the other parts of the lyrics in standard characters, he clearly finds it problematic for these words of deep local fangyan/dialect. Arguably, it is not entirely impossible to use the standard characters to write the three words: '哈巴儿' (ha-ba-er), '小娃儿' (xiao-wa-er) and '指姆儿' (zhi-mu-er), as some people might put them, but this way of writing does not satisfy the rapper's wish to capture the strong local phonological feature of 'er' in these words, which is integrated as a retroflex suffix to the preceding syllable (more like 'ha-ber', 'xiao-wer' and 'zhi-mer') rather than as a separate syllable as suggested by their written forms of Hanzi.[17]

[17] This insight was gained through interviews with Zeng Kun in December 2009.

This syllabic integration in pronunciation is, in the meantime, necessary for achieving the beat and the flow demanded by the hip-hop rhythm if we refer again to the acoustic effect of the lyrics. Finding a solution that can show these features is a problem for the rapper, as he says during an interview, 'How do you write "ha-ber", especially the "ber", and "er"? I don't think it's possible. I just make up my own way of writing it.' Neither does the Hanzi realization straightforwardly carry the denotational meanings of the three words for non-fang/dialect speakers who are more likely to understand only their standard counterparts 傻瓜 (shagua), 小孩 (xiaohai) and 拇指 (muzhi). This is especially so with the word '小娃 er', which in the local language means not only 'kid', someone young in age, but also 'junior' or 'minor' socially, even with a sense of 'humbleness', which has significant connotations as the rapper's self-reference: it is, just like '哈 ber', self-parody and satire which is in fact a resistance against the norm of 'cleverness' or 'superiority'. The use of 'ber' and 'er' offers an instance of 'dialect writing', as discussed earlier, as well as a polycentric manoeuvre in language. It pays particular attention to being truthful to the local fangyan/dialect as authenticity. For this, it refuses the norms of writing in standard Chinese, and resorts to orthographic innovation by introducing semiotic symbols from Latin script.

Taking the above two phenomena together – the implanting of the partly Latinized vernacular words '哈 ber', '小娃 er' and '指姆 er' alongside the adopted English words 'rap', 'raper' and 'superpower' – what can be observed is a hyper-blended, well-improvised yet highly recognizable and neat poetic rhyme both *transmodally*, such as the acoustic and visual endings of 'er', and *translingually* (in the sense of 'translanguaging', see e.g. Creese and Blackledge 2010), by syncretizing items from English, standard Chinese and Enshi fangyan/dialect. In fact, the whole of the lyrics shown is permeated by such characteristics of dense mixing. The fusion of the poetic, literary register and style of the standard variety with the sound and lexical features of the local vernacular in the main part of the lyrics is equally dynamic, and perhaps even more complex, as it is less visible due to fangyan/dialect's limited availability of writing resources. Each and every manoeuvre made here displays multiple purposes in both linguistic features and indexical meanings, orienting towards different orders of authenticity concurrently.

The effects of this polycentric, multilingual practice are twofold. On the one hand, it has created a new vernacular of hip-hop, by utilizing the language resources at the rapper's disposal in a maximally localized way. The hybridization of the local fangyan/dialect with the standard variety of Putonghua, as I have argued, is an appropriation of resources authenticated at a higher scale level. So is the use of the English words, the symbolically global resources for hip-hop authenticity. These words have been incorporated and reconstructed to fit in a hip-hop genre that is primarily structured in accordance to the patterns of the local fangyan/dialect. Their meaning, sound and shape, as already analysed, have all been localized for this purpose and to reflect this particular local knowledge. The appropriation and localization thus invoke a cultural

change by rendering these resources meaningful locally rather than exclusively nationally or globally. Consequently, in localizing the global genre of hip-hop, the rapper has implemented language innovations and brought these newly invented features into Enshi fangyan/dialect, including the script innovation for the local vernacular words. In this sense, he has introduced a new, innovated hip-hop genre in Enshi fangyan/dialect, and, as such, expanded its restricted sociolinguistic repertoire.

On the other hand, the mixed language use creates an indexical ensemble and reshuffles the orders of authenticity. The disqualification or non-authentication at the national and global scale levels are subverted by the rapper in his careful and skilful improvisation of Enshi fangyan/dialect, as he mixes it with resources from the higher scale levels. Each instance of language innovation is polycentric. It conforms to the normative authenticity at one scale level, but at the same time violates it at another and constructs an alternative order of authenticity that strongly emphasizes the relevance of the local. The rapper does not just demonstrate locality as a necessary element of authenticity; he also provides argumentation for an agentive role in what counts as real, for which hip-hop and its ideology of authenticity supply an effective cultural and discursive instrument and resource.

If at this point we take another look at the content of the lyrics, it is not difficult to see that it is also a meta-cultural reassertion of authenticity. The self-declaration of being 'unqualified', like the self-reference of '哈 ber' and '小娃 er', is yet another layer of the rapper's polycentric discursive strategy. Paradoxically, this single act is made of two confrontational moves about 'disqualification': what he says seemingly admits to it, but how he says it cannot make a more efficient disagreement – his language innovations have proven so. Thus again, he shows that authenticity is claimed via agentive production and performance.

To recapitulate, the norms of authenticity in Chinese society have undoubtedly marked the way language use manifests itself in Enshi hip-hop, with small and not so readily visible features of variation. The microanalysis in this section, however, shows that from a multimodal or transmodal viewpoint, the variation features are tremendously salient and intertwined, and the microscopic moves are indexically big and consequential. Although to illustrate this I have, to an extent, unpicked the rather bundled features of mixing in Enshi hip-hop, these features cannot be evaluated in separation from one another. More often than not they are multiple features of the very same act of language and must be considered as one unity of package.

It is therefore unhelpful to think of the overall language use of Enshi hip-hop in terms of communicative systems, as if an add-up of discrete, separable and stable pieces taken from different 'languages'. As indicated in the text, it is impossible to define where one language ends and another starts without disembodying and disfiguring what the language use has produced. In fact, the language of Enshi hip-hop is so intensely hybridized and syncretic that the boundaries of different systems of language, or of those the different language features are often associated with, are no longer meaningfully identifiable (Jørgensen 2008; Juffermans 2010). What are

being mixed, I suggest, is better understood in terms of the deployment of different semiotic elements or resources from the rapper's repertoire in the given context of hip-hop localization, and what should be at the centre of attention is the performative and agentive use of language (e.g. Pennycook 2003). As shown in the above analysis, the rapper's genre innovation speaks for a particular political consciousness, an anti-ortholinguistic and anti-hegemonic ideology of authenticity, and instantiates language change, and therefore cultural change. From this perspective, the Enshi rapper is anything but 'an unqualified rapper'.

5 Conclusion

In proposing a sociolinguistics of globalization, Blommaert (2010) points out that the unprecedented 'diversification of diversity' (Vertovec 2006) in the era of globalization poses both descriptive and theoretical challenges. This is, as we have seen, certainly the case with the phenomenon of Enshi hip-hop in globalizing China. In order to describe and explain what looks like a messy patchwork of 'inappropriate' use of language in this form of fangyan/dialect hip-hop from rural China that emerged on the internet, I had to make somewhat of a detour, by first examining its orders of authenticity – the cultural meaningfulness and social validity of the language resources that it is constituted of. This description of context, or *contextualization*, to follow Bauman and Briggs (1990), is in itself a necessary and critical dimension of the analysis and theorization for uncovering 'the layered nature of simultaneity in discourse' (Blommaert 2005: 125–157). If we follow the Hymesian tradition and take sociolinguistics as something that is fundamentally cultural, social, political and historical, we will not be satisfied with a synchronic observation without addressing the diachronization, history and process in discourse. For Enshi hip-hop, the locally defined meanings of authenticity are a 'conflation of context' (2005: 125–157) in which different forms of language resources that go hand-in-hand with their multi-layered and polycentric norms and orders are squeezed into one single communicative event. Without the detailed contextualization and historical account, we run the risk of displacing Enshi hip-hop from its particular system of constraints and inequality, overlooking the historical origins and trajectories of the various components that enter this sociolinguistic phenomenology. Hence cultural studies in the context of globalization need to incorporate a critical analysis of discourse in order to be socially meaningful and relevant.

The investigation of the language use in Enshi hip-hop, in the meantime, requires an investigation of *authenticity*, an overarching ideology not only in hip-hop performance, but also in social struggle and identity making in general. As we have seen, the orders of authenticity (i.e. the system of knowledge and power) in which people can manoeuvre and make identity claims are still predominantly organized in a modernist tradition, such as the monoglot ideology that is at work in China and many

other nation-states around the world and through which the social distinctions of centre/periphery, in/authenticity and dis/qualification are made. However, with globalization instruments such as hip-hop and the internet, people like the Enshi rapper who are placed in the margin gain opportunities to extend their 'local horizons of significance' (Pennycook 2007b) and redefine what counts as being real. For Enshi hip-hop, this is manifested in the micro features of fragmentation, plurality and hybridization in its language use. These features indicate ideological transgressions of the (existing) orders of authenticity. They suggest a transition from monoglot hegemony towards a (micro) polyglot hegemony (Silverstein 1996), from 'language' to 'languaging' (Jørgensen 2008), and therefore constitute language innovation. It is through such micro processes that the meanings of authenticity are symbolically modified, reconfigured and reclaimed. From this perspective, 'authenticity' and 'orders of authenticity' are better understood as complex, dynamic processes in which new meanings are constantly forged, based on the old ones.

In addressing the complexity and dynamics of language and authenticity in Enshi hip-hop, *polycentricity* turns out to be a main issue of concern and one of the core features of normativity negotiation and reconstruction. When new forms of diversity in the globalization processes (e.g. Enshi hip-hop) are confronted with the old, modernist ideologies about language, identity and order, they do not replace the existing frameworks, but rather complicate them by introducing alternative centres of authority and opening up new spaces for individual agency and struggle. This is evidenced in the rapper's argumentation for his own definition of authenticity through language innovation in Enshi hip-hop. The innovation is demanded by the hip-hop ideology of 'keepin' it real', which also exercises polycentric norms of authenticity at both the global and the local scale levels. These dynamics make innovation the site for (new) authenticity. Such authenticity is characterized by polycentricity, an emergent new norm of diversity. In this view, identity is never monolithic, singular, stable and coherent; it always entails a repertoire and orients towards multiple, sometimes conflicting norms. An intentional and creative piece of language use such as Enshi hip-hop therefore is an important source for understanding individual multivocality and deserves serious sociolinguistic treatment.

The argumentation for authenticity made in Enshi hip-hop is also related to the processes of disinventing and reconstituting the notions of language and culture. As I have already suggested, the kind of language mixing and hybridization in Enshi hip-hop should be explained as practice and performance in which new forms of language emerge. This raises challenges to the established beliefs about language as pre-existing systems that are out there at our disposal (Makoni and Pennycook 2007) and it points out the limitations of such views in accounting for the messy, structurally problematic reality of sociolinguistics in globalization (Blommaert 2010). These are fundamental questions about the nature of language and culture and about what we mean by multilingualism. By referring to language as resources, both the linguistic materiality of language and its potential as social capital in relation to specific cul-

tural functions are emphasized. What Enshi hip-hop illustrates is a productive use of resources that are disassociated from distinct language systems. This use of resources is selective and incomplete, or truncated, due to structural deficiency or sociopolitical coercion, but is nonetheless one coherent, creative and fully argumentative language act. It points to 'the real "language"' as emergent from the performance and production of a 'patchwork of specialized multilingual resources' (Blommaert 2010: 134). In this process, changes in language form, such as genre innovation in Enshi hip-hop authenticity, indicate changes in the dynamics between 'text' and 'context'. This means they indicate cultural changes as well.

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CHAPTER 3

Superdiversity on the internet: A case from China

1 Introduction: Internet and superdiversity[1]

The internet can be seen as a major mechanism in globalization processes and in the creation of superdiversity (Vertovec 2006, 2010). The World Wide Web opens up entirely new channels of communication, generating new linguistic and cultural forms, new ways of forming and maintaining contacts, networks and groups, and new opportunities for identity-making (e.g. Sundén 2003; Baron 2008; boyd[2] 2009). Technology has made it increasingly easy to transgress one's immediate life-world, extend it to and beyond the screen, and engage in local as well as translocal activities through previously unavailable means. All of this cannot be ignored in explaining the world today, and discussions on superdiversity should take into account the significance of the internet in complexifying the nature of human communication and engagement with others, of transnational movements and migration, and of social and cultural life in general. However, we should also be wary of too much optimism in this respect. The so-called 'internet revolution' witnessed in the past three decades or so entices many with the promise of a superdiverse space *par excellence* – a space of seemingly endless possibilities for self-expression, individual life projects and community formation. Prevailing internet ideologies often present us with an image of an online world saturated with opportunities and aspirations where one is able to indulge in infinite creativity in imagining and constructing both self and other.

While it may be a truism that life on the internet is overwhelmingly innovative and diverse, it is necessary to recognize that this happy heterogeneity is only part of the scene. Much like in the offline world, rules and norms are also to be complied with in online spaces. As we have demonstrated elsewhere (Varis, Wang and Du 2011), constraints do not only exist online, but are as important as the opportunities offered by the internet: they have determining effects on the way internet users are able to deploy and develop identity repertoires, engage with others and form com-

[1] This chapter was first published as P. Varis and X. Wang (2011). Superdiversity on the Internet: A case from China. *Diversities* 13 (2): 69–81. It was written in the context of the research project TRAnsformations of the Public Sphere (TRAPS) at the Department of Culture Studies, Tilburg University.

[2] danah boyd does not use capitals in writing her name and we adopt this preference when referring to her.

munities. While enabling continuous 'diversification of diversity' (Vertovec 2006: 1), the internet is also a space where diversity is controlled, ordered and curtailed. This control involves both explicit forms of normativity – e.g. policies for internet use as observable in different geopolitical contexts such as China – and more implicit ones that emerge and are negotiated and monitored in online micro practices. Normativity online is no less important or complex than normativity offline; on the contrary, life online is also overlaid by the overwhelming speed and scope of communication as well as unprecedented heteroglossia, all of which further complicates the picture (cf. Leppänen and Häkkinen 2012). As both a result and consequence of this heterogeneity and polycentricity, engaging in new diversity-ridden online environments often requires orientating in specific ways towards much more nuanced and more mixed, scaled forms of normativity than before, as a broad range of scales of orientation influences actions online. That is, in order to successfully communicate and engage in (sub)cultural action, it may be necessary to observe several different layers of normativity through which superdiversity (online) is controlled and shaped by multiscalar forces.

Attending to these dynamics between freedom, creativity and normativity is crucial for obtaining a detailed and nuanced understanding of superdiversity on the internet; yet the way in which such dynamics work, and, more fundamentally, what forms of normativity are at play and to what extent they organize online practices, still needs to be further interrogated. Attention to the work of order, coercion and power in cyberspace is needed to meet the current agenda for enriched theorization of concepts such as 'superdiversity' and 'globalization' in social sciences (see Arnaut 2012; Blommaert 2010; Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Blommaert and Varis 2011; Varis 2017).

This chapter is committed to the tasks outlined above, and we illustrate the exercises of normativity and creativity on the internet by examining a case from China[3] – a Beijing-based rapper and his online engagement with the global flows of hip-hop cultures. There are compelling reasons for this focus, the most elementary one being that it offers a rich instance of semiotization (i.e. meaning-creation using various semiotic resources) in online communication and identity-making in the context of globalization. Its use of multi-modal (texts, pictures and acoustics) and multilingual (Chinese, English and Korean) resources and its metapragmatic narrative on cultural practices (how to do hip-hop online), as we shall see soon, are all sites for the production of creativity as well as normativity. Secondly, as 'internet hip-hop' – both

[3] The case discussed here is based on (internet) fieldwork by Xuan Wang between autumn 2010 and spring 2011 as part of her PhD research. The fieldwork involved an initial four-month period of online observation of hip-hop related activities surrounding MC Liangliang and his crew (musical performances, blogging, online discussions with fans and 'enemies'). After some online interaction and interviews with MC Liangliang by the researcher from outside China, a focused interview with him was conducted in Beijing in early 2011. This was followed by further ongoing contacts and observations via the internet.

created in online spaces and published online – it brings together two typical forms of superdiversity in the context of cultural globalization. Hip-hop is 'the most profound and the most perplexing cultural, musical and linguistic movement of the late 20th/early 21st century' (Alim 2009: 3) with highly heteroglossic, innovative language and other cultural practices (e.g. Alim, Ibrahim and Pennycook 2009; Pennycook 2003, 2007a, 2007b; Westinen 2014), and its emergence online as an internet subculture hugely expands its potential for superdiversity while at the same time appears shaped by normative forces.

As will surface later, the involvement of the two vehicles of superdiversity in our case (i.e. the semiotization of Chinese hip-hop) does not necessarily lead to doubled freedom and creativity in discursive behaviours. Rather, each opportunity for creativity goes hand in hand with normativity that is multiply layered and operates on different scale levels. Further, our case study assumes an empirical, 'bottom-up' ethnographic approach (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Cora Garcia et al., 2009; Hymes 1996; Juffermans 2010; Rampton 2007). This allows us to develop more detailed and sophisticated understandings of this new communicative environment and how it works through the fine-grains of language use by the internet users, as argued for in the introductory section of this volume (Blommaert and Rampton 2011). Finally, we engage critically with China which, though at times projected as being in the periphery from the globalization centres such as the nation-states in Western Europe, provides an interesting case of engagement with both superdiversity and normativity in the virtual space. China's internet development is impressive, but is also known for stringent control and censorship, this being a clear example of 'language policing' (Blommaert et al. 2009) from the state level. As our case suggests, however, there is more to it than this: normativity can also be imposed from below – by oneself or one's peers – and this introduces further, intricate local and translocal systems of normativity – the micro politics of language and/or cultural policing that can be found in all interactions in different social spaces and contexts.

In what follows, we first situate our case through a discussion on the emerging superdiversity on the internet in China, and hip-hop in China. We will then move on to discuss our Chinese case to illustrate how what could be termed a *global supervernacular* (i.e. the global hip-hop culture; see, e.g., Blommaert 2011) is creatively employed by a Chinese rapper online, and how this super-vernacular is spoken with an original 'local Chinese accent' – all the while strictly adhering to a certain complex of norms. The complex of creativity and norms will ultimately lead us to the notion of *authenticity* which, essentially, is about discursive orientations towards a specific configuration of norms in order to 'pass as' someone or something (see Blommaert and Varis 2011). Instead of locality or localization, it is authenticity that is the driving force in the 'superdiverse' effort examined here.

2 Internet cultures in China

China became a more active participant in globalization processes two decades ago, and soon became considered a rising member of the global 'network society' (Castells 2000; 2004) via rapid, large-scale adoption of new technologies, such as the internet, to facilitate and advance its economic modernization. Today, China is home to the largest number of internet users in the world, reaching over 600 million by the end of 2013, and its internet penetration rate has reached over 45%.[4] All these developments have taken place within the short span of just over a decade. The speed, volume and intensity of these developments are astonishing, even if rather uneven in terms of geographical and social distribution and accessibility (see Lu et al. 2002 for an overview of the internet development in China).

The impact of 'the spirit of Chinese informationalism' (Qiu 2004: 99) is not, however, exclusively economic. Like in other parts of the world, in China the internet is playing an ever more prominent role in the transformation of the public sphere and civil society, fostering the formation of an emerging network society and virtual communities, offering new space and resources for transnational and translocal engagements, and giving rise to enhanced social mobility and various empowering political, cultural and personal manoeuvres and contestations (see, e.g., Leibold 2010; Li 2010; Lo 2009; Yang 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). The scope of opportunities, creativity and freedom introduced and sustained by the internet is tremendous, even though China also implements explicit regulations on internet use through heavy censorship (MacKinnon 2008; Qiu 1999). The new opportunities are perhaps most notable in relation to political movements addressing questions such as freedom of speech, citizen activism and democracy in Chinese society (e.g. MacKinnon 2009; Qiu 2004; Yang 2009), not to mention the fast expansion of e-business and consequently booming economic and social infrastructures based on telecommunications (e.g. Liang 2010). The emergence of internet subcultures is another remarkable aspect of the transnationalization of diversity in Chinese society, especially in mediating the global flows of different forms of popular culture, such as movies, fashion and music.

Hip-hop today is linguistically and culturally an emblematic 'superdiverse' phenomenon, with local interpretations of the global flourishing, also – and perhaps particularly so – on the internet. 'Internet hip-hop' is also a good example of an internet subculture – or, using different terminology, a 'super-group' in Arnaut's terms (see Blommaert and Rampton 2011) – that brings together great numbers of individuals who via the internet engage with, circulate, appropriate and modify global hip-hop flows otherwise less visible and accessible for them. This is particularly prominent and relevant in China, as 'internet hip-hop', known as *wangluo xiha*, occupies much of the hip-hop scene there. While still negotiating its way into the highly normative

[4] See, for example, http://www1.cnnic.cn/AU/MediaC/rdxw/hotnews/201401/t20140117_43849.htm on a report by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC).

cultural and social mainstream, the globally available format of hip-hop is spreading rapidly and, primarily, via the internet among the grassroots Chinese. Even if the visibility of the translocal practices of hip-hop is largely restricted to the online space, the degree of diversification in their uptake in China is extraordinary. Complex translocal, transnational networks are developed, and large numbers of locally appropriated versions of hip-hop begin to emerge on the internet, varying greatly in terms of language features, cultural styles and political motivations. MC Liangliang (the focus of this study), whose online engagement with hip-hop has gained him considerable credibility among hip-hop and youth communities in China, and connected him to the wider part of global hip-hop flows, is one example of these processes. The translocal flows, thanks to the internet, also reach marginalized individuals in remote locations, as in the case of a dialect rapper from Enshi – the periphery of globalization in China – that we have recorded elsewhere (see Varis, Wang and Du 2011; Wang 2012). This mobility offered by hip-hop globalization online is also observable in other parts of the world, for instance, in the case of Amoc, the Sami rapper in Lapland of northern Finland (e.g. Ridanpää and Pasanen 2009; Pietikäinen 2010; Leppänen and Pietikäinen 2010). The opportunities in such cases are as much about having access to and being able to participate in the global as they are about the appropriation and (re)invention of the local. What is at stake in the mixture of global and local is authenticity – the defining feature of global hip-hop ideology (e.g. Pennycook 2007a).

To 'keep it real', i.e. to be authentic in hip-hop terms, involves the creative blending of local and translocal resources while also orienting towards different normative scales that are brought together at the moment of creation. To 'keep it real' is indeed to speak a 'resistance vernacular' (Potter 1995) that demonstrates rebelliousness and deviation, or creativity by rendering what is global with local features. But creativity is always tied to normativity (how to be authentic and 'keep it real'), and such dynamics are also relevant on the internet – if not particularly so, because of the reduced prominence of locality in online spaces. Further, even though the internet has hugely expanded our potential for creativity, normative systems do impinge upon online meaning-making. This, in the Chinese case examined here, also includes the state-imposed control of 'unacceptable' online behaviour by means of content and/or even website removal; that is, the products of one's creativity can even be completely removed should they fail to adhere to the prevailing norms established for online behaviour. The dynamics between normativity, especially in relation to the production of hip-hop authenticity, and creativity will be of central concern in our examination of a 26-year-old Beijing-based rapper and his online hip-hop – i.e. the products of his (sub)cultural activity that he posts online.

3 'Real hip-hop' in China: Creativity and normativity online

Upon entering the world of online Chinese hip-hop it should be observed that posting music and lyrics online is of course not specific to Chinese hip-hop or even hip-hop in general – all kinds of artists all over the world publish their products online. This has fundamentally changed the economy and distribution of music as such: the world of music has become notably smaller and more accessible in many respects, and it is perhaps realistic to say that music producers independent of big industries can much more easily gain visibility for themselves and speak to audiences otherwise out of their reach. This also means that, despite the control (and homogenizing, de-diversifying influence) of huge industries in the business, the availability of different kinds of cultural products is, thanks to the internet, more widespread than ever before. That is, the internet allows for the emergence and visibility of cultural forms otherwise relatively, if not entirely, invisible to audiences and thus facilitates the diversification of culture and forms of cultural production in circulation.

The Chinese case investigated here – MC 良良, or MC Liangliang[5] – is a case in point: we are looking at a rapper now based in Beijing (where he migrated several years ago) who without the internet would probably have much less visibility, and be able to reach far fewer people[6]. The internet allows him to post his music and lyrics online and also to embrace a certain kind of identity – to engage in the global hip-hop semiotics in an unprecedented manner. Online environments offer us these possibilities, simply provided that there is access to a device with an internet connection. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that without the internet none of this would happen, or that this rapper in Beijing would not have the global semiotics and cultural flows at his disposal – it is rather that the internet facilitates all this, and allows for forms of engagement and participation that would not exist without it.

The internet, of course, is not only a space for unlimited and unrestrained flows. The rules of engagement have (at least in many cases) not been established a priori, i.e. norms are *emergent*, and this goes for all kinds of norms – those of communication, (sub)culturalization and identity-making. The fact that in many cases the norms have not been pre-established does not, therefore, mean that there are no norms, but that they are often (re)worked in the process of engagement on online fora. It should also be borne in mind that the global cultural flows within our reach thanks to the Internet are not only liberating and allowing for more diversity, but also provide

[5] All translations from Chinese to English in this paper are ours.

[6] It is important to note that although we describe Beijing as MC Liangliang's 'base' in the sense of physical location, we regard his hip-hop activities as translocal rather than bound to locality (i.e. Beijing) as these activities are essentially internet-based. The specific relevance of the locality of Beijing is beyond the scope and outside the focus of the present paper, and is addressed elsewhere (Wang 2011).

templates and blueprints for (sub)cultural action, and therefore also constrain online creativity.

Global cultures, codes and flows, however, do not work according to a deterministic logic: they are not swallowed without chewing, so to speak. In this process of 'chewing' the global semiotic resources, potentially very interesting things happen, as 'global' and 'local' resources become creatively blended. As a result, global codes with a local accent appear. Global codes or templates are what we can call *supervernaculars* – global ways of fashioning identities, forms of communication, genres, etc. recognizable for members of emergent super-groups (see Blommaert 2011; Blommaert and Velghe 2012; Velghe 2011, 2012). These super-vernaculars become recognized *as* certain things because they share certain recognizable features, and through the re-enactment and re-circulation of these, *super-communities* are created and subsequently sustained. To put it otherwise, certain shared indexical orders[7] are acknowledged and recognized as belonging to a certain super-vernacular – for instance, in the case discussed here, that of 'hip-hopness'. These global orders offer different affordances – resources and opportunities for meaning-making – for those appropriating these large-scale scripts and blending them with local orders, and one such affordance is de-globalization. As a result, of such appropriations, *dialects of the super-vernacular* appear (Blommaert 2011). This is what we shall now illustrate through the case of MC Liangliang and his posse.

4 MC Liangliang and his crew: The semiotization of authenticity

Let us start with the rapper himself, MC Liangliang, or Liangliang as many of his fans refer to him. This name, as is common for both online and hip-hop names, is of course a pseudonym although, interestingly, 'Liang' is taken from his real name. His name also mixes the global hip-hop English 'MC' with the Chinese 'Liangliang', marking him as a member of the global hip-hop community, and, simultaneously, as a member of a narrower hip-hop niche, i.e. the Chinese hip-hop community. However, what is equally intriguing is that according to Liangliang, he is not an 'MC' in its globally recognized meaning (Master of Ceremony). Instead, he claims that his full hip-hop name is 'Month Catamenia Liang Liang (*yuejing Liang Liang*)'.[8] One way of interpreting this is that the global symbol of 'MC', as part of the hip-hop package, is localized and reinvented by Liangliang for his own purposes, while this shift towards local

[7] 'Indexical orders' captures the idea that the meanings attached to semiotic signs (be they forms of language use, pieces of clothing, etc.) are not random, but systematic, stratified and context-specific: we attribute meaning to signs according to conventionalized, normative patterns. For an accessible account, see Blommaert 2005.

[8] See an online interview with MC Liangliang at http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5074792a01008o9f.html (viewed on July 4, 2014).

also involves items that are atypically local (in English) and incomplete (his use of 'month' instead of 'monthly'). This appropriation is about creativity as well as rebelliousness by taking the liberty to reject the global norm and to create something new. The outcome of the new invention, 'Month Catamenia' is also about rebelliousness as the phrase in Chinese (which is also explicitly used by Liangliang in the Chinese version of his hip-hop name) is a culturally sensitive word often replaced with a euphemism. The transgression apparent in the selection of the term iconises both the cultural and the counter-cultural sides of hip-hop. Here we already begin to see alignments toward – and resistance against – different sets of indexicalities and markers of identity and identification, and observing MC Liangliang's online presence will take us a step further in seeing how the global becomes enmeshed with the local.

MC Liangliang appears actively on several internet platforms, primarily the website *www.oyinyue.com* for publishing his songs, and the *Baidu* message board and Sina microblog for chats and blogs related to his artistic work, and other more general topics – that is, to engage with his audiences. He raps both independently and as part of a crew called 乱感觉 ('MessFeel'). Several of the members of this group live in his hometown region in North-Eastern China; so, apart from himself, none of the group members is currently based in Beijing. The collaborative work of composing and performing is therefore done entirely online, and the group uses QQ (a Chinese program used for instant messaging, blogging, gaming, etc.) to exchange ideas and inspiration, to relay bits of work or simply to socialize with one another. Their artistic production is, then, essentially a virtual and translocal enterprise.

Such a virtual and translocal enterprise of course implies a number of liberties and gains that can be achieved only through such methods of artistic production. Thanks to the internet, MC Liangliang and his partners are able to produce and circulate their own music online, without the limitations of time and space and the 'editorial' restrictions (by, e.g., record companies) present in 'offline' artistic work. The group is able to collaborate 'off-the-scene', and to create, organize and engage with their peer groups and communities of practice that are either non-existent or invisible in their immediate corporeal world – whether these are people from back home, or elsewhere outside Beijing. The internet also allows for going with the global flows of hip-hop; in online environments, it is easier than ever before to participate in and take influences from the transnational hip-hop scene. MC Liangliang's online pursuits, however, are not only about liberty and chances for participation in global activities, but also about the pursuit of authenticity as a rapper. In this sense, the scene is also one that functions according to certain regularities and normativities.

We open our analysis by examining the first stanza of a song published online by MC Liangliang and his crew to illustrate the points made above, but first a few words about the hip-hop semiotics by which the song is framed. Online, MC Liangliang does not only produce music or lyrics, but also performs the essential identity act of 'being hip-hop'. We can see that his choice of profile pictures on *www.oyinyue.com* and

Baidu message board point to familiar ways of fashioning hip-hop identities. Figure 1 features a young Afro male, suggesting an alignment with 'hip-hop authority' embodied in 'blackness' – being and doing 'black'.[9] Figure 2 is different: there we see, in a way, a more 'authentic' image of Liangliang in the sense that this is an actual picture of him.[10] The features of his face are obscured, but the emblematic signifiers indexing 'real hip-hop' are there: he wears a baseball cap and a sport top, both iconic of the globalized hip-hop fashion; the raised middle finger and the cigarette in his mouth point to a particular hip-hop attitude – a certain coolness, rebelliousness and subversiveness – the kind of 'badness' familiar from urban hip-hop scenes. It is also worth noting that the image features his hip-hop name in a particular way, with the English letters 'MC' printed much larger than the Chinese characters '良良': in this way, the appropriation of the global semiotics becomes highlighted. In a way these two images are very different, yet both point to a certain 'hip-hopness', the creation of which is afforded by the different semiotic resources offered by the internet (creating a profile; using different multimodal means to do this; being creative in doing this, etc.), and based on what MC Liangliang believes hip-hop is about.

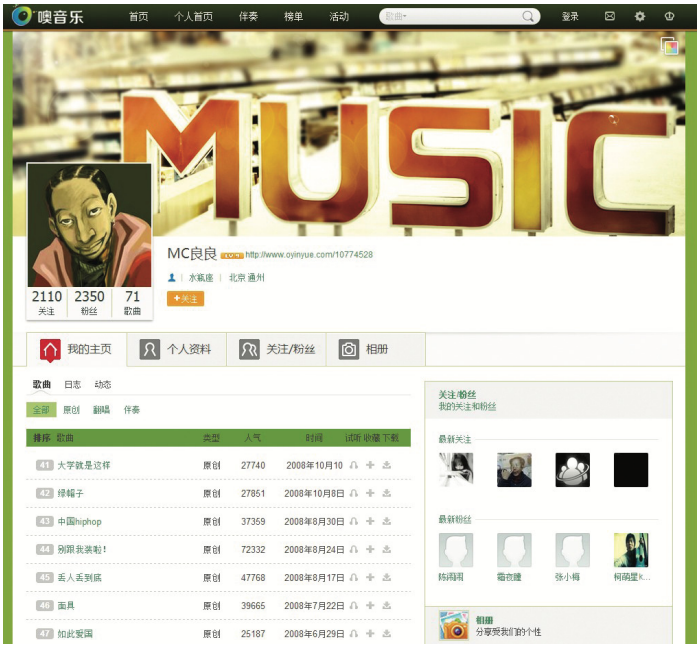

Figure 1: MC Liangliang's profile on www.oyinyue.com

[9] http://www.oyinyue.com/10774528 (last viewed July 4, 2014).

[10] http://tieba.baidu.com/i/98805018?st_mod=pbandfr=tb0_forumandst_type=uface (viewed on July 4, 2014).

Figure 2: MC Liangliang's profile on Baidu Message Board

Let us now move on to the actual product of MC Liangliang's group, i.e. one of the songs he posted online. The song by MC Liangliang that we use here to illustrate our point is called 中国 HIP-HOP – Chinese HIP-HOP. This already suggests to us something about the content of the song, as well as the kinds of orders of indexicality evoked in this cultural artefact. Dissecting the title into its constituent parts is quite simple – it consists of two parts, 'Chinese' and 'hip-hop'. However simple this may seem at first glance, these two point to different sets of indexicals, and different layers therein: that of the global phenomenon of – or, the super-vernacular of – hip-hop, as well as its Chinese 'accent'. We shall further delve into these different layers next.

The vocals for the song here are split into two parts, as in the lyrics posted online in written form the first part of them is not included. However, the song can also be listened to online, and in the audio version we can see that the written lyrics provided online do not include everything. Here is the missing part, assisting us in orienting towards the kinds of indexicalities at play here:

[chorus] *The real hip-hop, the real hip-hop*
[Liangliang] *Yea, the real hip-hop, Chinese hip-hop*
[chorus] *The real hip-hop, the real hip-hop*
[Liangliang] *Yea, yea, hum*

The first thing to note here is that this is *English* – a resource that can without doubt be recognized as belonging to the global hip-hop vernacular, whether or not we subscribe to the view that the Afro-American format is *the* global format. With the starting lines, we see a move from 'real hip-hop' to 'the real hip-hop, Chinese hip-hop', suggesting that Chinese hip-hop is, in fact, *the real* hip-hop. It might be suggested that there is an interesting contradiction here, as the implication that Chinese hip-hop is the real hip-hop is made by the means of *English* (although here we could also make the assumption that the English part is left out from the written lyrics posted in order to make the song appear more 'Chinese'). However, from the point of view of authenticity there is no contradiction here, as the language of authentic hip-hop is, indeed, English – the super-vernacular that becomes appropriated and 'chewed' here to serve certain purposes.

As for the *written* lyrics themselves, posted online on www.oyinyue.com,[11] we can already make one observation without even reading them, i.e. by simply *looking* at them. Let us have a look (Figure 3).

中国 HIPHOP MC 良良	Chinese HIPHOP MC Liangliang
拉开窗帘又看到人群喧嚣的大街 有很多 HIPHOP 泛儿的孩子穿着白色 T 恤 都挂着 BLING BLING 一闪一闪亮晶晶 NY 的帽子 白色球鞋 还有雷鬼式的头型	open the curtains I see again the crowded noisy street many HIPHOP styled kids in white T-shirts wearing BLINGBLING, twinkling and shining in caps with NY, white sneakers and reggae-fashioned hair
可是 你懂 HIPHOP 吗？BABAY 中国的 RAP 很假 听多了会变傻 大都是四四拍的唱得 好像数来宝 没完没了的双押韵 压得~人想睡觉	but do you understand HIPHOP? BABAY China's RAP is fake, you'll become stupid if you listen too much most of it is 4-4 beat, like shulaibao endlessly double rhyming beats you to sleep
嘘~~~请把音响关掉 BABAY 中国那所谓的 HIPHOP MUSIC 让人听不下 张嘴就吹** 有 AK-47 从上海到北京都运着他们的 KING	shhh… please turn off the speakers BABAY China's so-called HIPHOP MUSIC is unbearable to listen to bragging *** as their mouths open, that they have AK-47 from Shanghai to Beijing, transporting their KING
**地 中国 HIPHOP 前辈都是害人精 **地 玩儿饶舌的嘴巴没实力 **地 YO 中国 HIPHOP 前辈都是害人精 **地 看到这群伪 HIPHOP 我就想听戏	***, Chinese HIPHOP predecessors are perilous ***, these rappers' mouths have no strengths ***, YO Chinese HIPHOP predecessors are perilous ***, seeing the bunch of bogus HIPHOP I wanna listen to opera

Figure 3: The opening stanza of the lyrics of 'Chinese HIP-HOP', translated by the author

The observation to be made is that, in the lyrics – which are mainly in Chinese – there are English elements embedded into it. Or, vice versa, it would be equally, if indeed not more, justified to say that the Chinese is embedded into the English, as the global

[11] http://yc.oyinyue.com/420/699/1008699.shtml (viewed on July 4, 2014).

super-vernacular provides a template for the Chinese to appear. In any case, the English elements here are very conspicuous due to the use of capitalized Roman script for writing them. The lyrics are, then, an interesting linguistic mix of different scripts and of Chinese and English, the latter appearing to give the lyrics a (Western) hip-hop flavour. Linguistically, English is not the only 'non-Chinese' resource present in the lyrics, though: listening to the song, later on we also hear Korean, rapped by Joonjoon, a Korean-speaking member of MC Liangliang's group. In the written lyrics, however, Korean is not visible, due to the absence of Korean within the repertoire of the person who produced the lyrics in the written form and posted them online, i.e. MC Liangliang. Thus, what is linguistically actually more complex and diverse than this version suggests, and is of course there in the audio version, is reduced in this written online version into a mix of only certain (linguistic) resources due to factors constraining the presentation. It is clear, however, that there is an orientation here towards what hip-hop globally 'really' is about.

We shall return to this issue – i.e. the mix of Chinese, Korean and English – in more detail below, but let us first consider another feature in the lyrics that we can spot simply by *looking* at them: the small asterisks used to mask the 'inappropriate' word 'fuck'. Here we encounter perhaps the most explicit level of normativity shaping the lyrics. Even a less perceptive reader will notice the asterisks that disrupt the otherwise 'normal-looking' hip-hop lyrics – 'normal' in the sense of meeting the expectation we have when we see them, and how they are organized. The little stars, however, are there for the precise function of making the lyrics 'normal', but on another scale: 'normal' in the sense of sanitizing them to be acceptable for the online environment in which they appear.

What the little stars suggest is intervention by the state, mediated by internet providers – often seen in the case of blogging in China, for instance, as bloggers may find individual (inappropriate) characters censored from their posts within minutes after their publication online, or even automatically censored at the moment of writing due to automatized censoring systems (as was the case with MC Liangliang here). Similar phenomena can of course be observed elsewhere as well (e.g. on YouTube, and also when 'Western' lyrics including what are considered profanities are posted online on certain sites). This is, however, a typically Chinese intervention in the sense that the realization of norm-imposing (i.e. judgement on what is unacceptable, undesirable) is consistently marked with the little stars and, more importantly, is implemented by *the state*. This clearly illustrates that even in a supposedly free, global online environment, interventions from strictly local powers (in this case the state) do take place. However, we might even suggest that in this online space, the stars even function as adding a further layer of 'hip-hop authenticity' to the lyrics – what the stars cover is the very stuff that makes it recognizable as certain kind of hip-hop, namely, the kind inspired by rebellion and deviation for the purpose of creativity, and consequently authentic as such.

We have seen the imposition of two different normativities already: those of the state, and those of the global hip-hop culture. The appropriation of 'dirty' words (such as 'fuck' which is replaced by asterisks) in the lyrics is of course a feature of the global super-vernacular of hip-hop, and here, in what can be labelled as a local dialect of that super-vernacular, this feature is appropriated and produces an effect of authenticity. Interestingly, although the words cannot be seen here – they can only be heard when listening to the song – and they are replaced by the little stars, it can be argued that not being able to see them online further contributes to the 'hip-hopness' of the lyrics, i.e. their authenticity: the stars mark something that is outside the established norms, transgressive and deviant, and therefore pointing to the core of what (certain kinds of) hip-hop are about. Two indexical scales (both 'good' and 'bad') and, consequently, two different normativities, are evoked with the same signs.

To return to the mix of Chinese, Korean and English, a number of observations can be made. Both English and Korean hip-hop are, although on different scales and of different value, *transnational global flows*. Both English and Korean also have purchase in the local Chinese scene, and it can be suggested that their value here is purely indexical: they get their value within the local Chinese economy of signs. Korean might seem to have less hip-hop prestige for Western audiences, but not so in China, where Korean hip-hop is upmarket hip-hop (see, e.g., Shim 2006 for a discussion on the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia). The role of English is something more familiar for larger, global audiences: it is the super-vernacular template that is essential in creating hip-hop authenticity. It is also worth noting here that the use of English is by no means random: it is not *any* English that we find in the lyrics, but rather the recognizable hip-hop English – the global elements that are iconic of hip-hop culture. Hence the expressions *hip-hop*, *blingbling*, *baby*, *rap*, *NY*: they are part and parcel of what constitutes a core vocabulary of hip-hop.

Hip-hop authenticity is not, however, only about what is there: as Potter (1995: 71, emphasis original) observes, 'hip-hop's authenticity, like that of jazz, is continually posed *against* that which it is not.' This is something we already pointed to, as the global resources employed ('wrong, bad language') meet a different set of norms (one that disapproves of such language). Another way in which this is visible is the juxtaposition of Chinese hip-hop with more traditional Chinese cultural forms: Chinese opera, and *shulaibao* (a northern Chinese folk theatrical form consisting of recitation accompanied by clapperboard rhythm). Here, the authenticity of hip-hop is contrasted with specific spatial understandings of authenticity: the authenticity of the rapper's region of origin (*shulaibao*) and of his country of origin (Chinese opera). Thus, in making this Chinese hip-hop song about Chinese hip-hop there are a number of normative levels to attend to: it is acceptable to be 'local' by using Chinese, but authenticity cannot be tied down to local or regional emblematic cultural forms. For authenticity effects, MC Liangliang distances himself from traditional Chinese culture on two levels: the specifically local (*shulaibao*) and the national (Chinese opera).

These cultural forms index tradition, i.e. reproduction of what is already there, and this does not mix well with the new, transgressive, innovative and hybridized hip-hop Chineseness. MC Liangliang's act of distancing himself from both *shulaibao* and opera in general illustrates the complexity and polycentricity of the scales of orientation here: being an authentic Chinese rapper requires rejecting both the specifically local *shulaibao* and the national tradition – that is, tradition on two scale levels – and instead orienting towards the global super-vernacular of hip-hop.

A further normative level we can observe in the lyrics is indeed the metadiscursive level on *what authentic hip-hop is all about*. MC Liangliang makes a clear difference between 'inauthentic' Chinese hip-hop and Chinese rappers who do perform the right moves, so to speak, but are nevertheless not attentive enough to normativity: they dress and talk 'hip-hop', but they are not 'real hip-hop'. The white T-shirts, the blingbling, the NY caps and the references to AK-47 are there, but it is ultimately *fake*. What distinguishes MC Liangliang and his crew from other Chinese hip-hoppers is perhaps not entirely clear, as in the end the means with which MC Liangliang creates hip-hop authenticity are ultimately the same as the ones he rebukes – the appropriation of the global hip-hop super-vernacular, i.e. the global template with its recognizable features and indexicalities. What is clear, however, is that this is indeed authentic hip-hop: it turns the strive for authenticity into a competition over who is the *most* authentic one, and this is where the 'correct' use of the global template becomes crucial: its appropriation is by no means random, and creativity not limitless. Creative authenticity, online or offline, has to follow certain norms.

5 Discussion

It is time to draw some tentative conclusions about our case here, going back to the points we raised above. As has become evident here and as pointed out earlier by Pennycook (2007a: 103, emphasis original),

> One of the most fascinating elements of the global/local relations in hip-hop, then, is what we might call *the global spread of authenticity*. Here is a perfect example of a tension between on the one hand the spread of a cultural dictate to adhere to certain principles of what it means to be authentic, and on the other, a process of localization that makes such an expression of staying true to oneself dependent on local contexts, languages, cultures, and understandings of the real.

What Pennycook is describing in his analysis of hip-hop is a process of *localization*. Rather than being specifically about *locality*, we suggest that what we have observed here is a project of *authenticity*, involving several normative scales that need to be attended to in order to make the project successful – in order to 'pass as' something.

The multi-modal project of authenticity observed here entails different levels of recognisability: it can be recognized as 'Chinese', as 'hip-hop', and, finally, as 'Chinese hip-hop'. Hence, this is not simply about global hip-hop being localized, or local hip-hop being globalized. Ian Condry (2006: 19) made a similar observation in his examination of 'Japanese' hip-hop: 'the opposition between globalizing and localizing turns out to be a false dichotomy', as 'hip-hop cannot be seen as straightforward Japanization of a global style, nor as simply Americanization' (Condry 2006: 11). What is at stake here is being 'Chinese enough', as well as being 'hip-hop enough' – attending to different sets of normativities that are essentially about being *authentic* (see Blommaert and Varis 2011). That is, what we see here is not about 'the hip-hop ideology of keepin' it real as a discursively and culturally mediated *mode of representing and producing the local*' (Pennycook 2007a: 112, our emphasis). Essentially, what is produced is *authenticity*, and this is done by orienting towards different multiscalar – and hence polycentric – sets of normativities, embracing others and becoming censored by others.

Authenticity is of course very much part of hip-hop discourse in general, and that is something that has already been established by others before (see, e.g., Ghandnoosh 2010). As we have seen here, the global template of hip-hop enables new, creative semiotizations of authenticity – it provides affordances for local actors for doing so. In these creative semiotizations, it is the employment of bits and pieces of the global template – the global super-vernacular – that makes it recognizable as hip-hop, whereas the local elements make it locally significant within a particular economy of signs and meanings. As MC Liangliang has helped us observe, cultural processes and artefacts are often complex linguistic and (sub)cultural mixes, employing global super-vernaculars with a local (here Chinese) edge to them. We might even say that the bits and pieces of the global template are purely *indexical* (in our case, indexing 'hip-hopness'), and, as they become *de-globalized*, they enter a different system of signs and help project images of, for instance, globalness and urbanness.

To return to the issue of superdiversity, and conceptualizing it in order to explain the diversification of diversity we witness – and all of it increasingly in online environments – we suggest that (super-)communities of today are not organized around the indexicals of locality, but rather of *authenticity*, and that authenticity revolves around *blending* multiscalar resources in particular ways. The fact that global resources are localizable expands the scope of 'authenticity', and as global resources – the familiar, recognizable templates that we can either embrace or choose to ignore (although more often than not having to opt for the first choice) – become de-globalized, they can be used to creatively make new meanings, new identities and new communities. As we have emphasized already, however, this creativity is not unlimited. We have used the internet and a specific internet subculture, internet hip-hop, here to illustrate our point, but without a doubt, our observations can be extended elsewhere.

Rather than only *localizing* global flows, there is much more to the transnational cultural processes that we see around us.

This has implications for our research agenda, and the questions we ask of the research objects which we conceptualize as superdiverse. Such superdiverse realities – the fashioning of identities, the construction of communities and subcultural meanings, the semiotics we employ in order to belong, to be authentic as someone or something – involve normative processes: procedures of orienting towards and thereby constituting several centres and orders of indexicality. In observing superdiversity on the ground, normativity will have to be on our agenda.

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CHAPTER 4

Identity repertoires on the internet: Opportunities and constraints

1 Introduction[1]

'I Twitter, therefore I am' – this is the title of a symposium held at Tilburg University in the summer of 2010. The title is not so surprising, or at least not at present. A mere five years ago it would have been unthinkable, and the speed and degree to which we have been habituated (or, as some would say, socialized) to new media formats as tools for being or becoming someone is something that seems to often escape the attention of observers. Things move fast, and research only catches up with new developments at a relatively slow pace.[2] The effect of that is that papers such as this one face challenges, the main one being that they have to summarize and comment on an ever-broadening range of recent fast developments – in other words, shoot a moving target. Another one is that they risk becoming dated in no time: for instance, while Facebook at the time of writing has become one of the biggest changes in society and culture ever seen – its reported 500 million users and the 700 billion minutes these people spend on it per month testify to this (Facebook 2010) – it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that no one will even remember Facebook a decade from now.

The rise of the internet has over the past two decades generated a whole range of new patterns of human interaction, enabled new forms of human relationships and, consequently, also offered new opportunities for creating, articulating and ratifying new identities. The mechanisms of these new developments are being explored, even if research on it is still quite fragmentary. However, we believe that we do see some general lines developing here, positive ones as well as negative ones. The positive ones are the new patterns and practices which enable people to create something new, and the internet indeed offers quite a range of such opportunities for expanding, altering or developing identity repertoires. The negative ones are the constraints on such forms of creativity, and we want to emphasize from the outset

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[1] This chapter was first published as P. Varis, X. Wang and C. Du (2011). Identities repertoires on the Internet: Opportunities and constraints. *Applied Linguistic Review* 2: 265-284. It has been written in the context of the research project TRAnsformations of the Public Space (TRAPS) at the Department of Culture Studies, Tilburg University.

[2] By way of illustration, a now leading journal in the field, *Global Media and Communication*, was only launched in 2005.

that the constraints are as important as the opportunities, even if constraints perhaps have not yet drawn sufficient academic attention.

We will attend to these issues first by means of a broad sketch of the main issues surrounding the theme of this paper. We shall see that 'virtual' reality is quite a misnomer, because what is 'virtual' is very 'real' in the lives of many people, especially when identity processes are concerned. We shall also see that throughout these identity processes, issues of authenticity and authentification, ratification and legitimation are salient, and that we encounter 'internet ideologies' in this field – dominant ideologies of freedom and liberty that guide people towards new developments in their identity repertoires. Such ideologies need to be set off against the background of the panoptic and regulated nature of the internet – a virtual space of real control and power. This is where constraints come into play. Doing identity work on the internet has to follow certain rules and norms: in addition, it is open to scrutiny and assessment by often unknown and/or unsuspected others. The two cases presented here, taken from emerging Chinese internet subcultures, can illustrate this dynamic between opportunity and constraint.

This is the general plot of the paper, but before embarking on our discussion, we need to introduce two perhaps rather obvious but nevertheless fundamental introductory points. First, what happens on the internet can naturally not be dissociated from the wider patterns of social transformation we have witnessed over the past decades – globalization processes entailing a complex of social, cultural, political and economic features. People, capital and goods move in new ways; the patterns of circulation of popular culture have altered, and we have new truly global art forms such as hip-hop; the meaning of key concepts in the social sciences – such as 'community', 'diaspora', 'culture', and 'identity' – have been altered, and the speed and scope of these processes have indeed often been attributed to the internet. It goes without saying that what follows needs to be set against that background (see e.g. Nederveen Pieterse 1995; Appadurai 1996; Castells 1996; Maffesoli 1996; Block 2004; Androutsopoulos 2006; Georgakopoulou 2006; Karaganis 2007 for different perspectives on these developments).

Second, when we talk about identity – the specific focus here – we have to take on board the achievements of decades of advanced scholarship (here we can think of such diverse works as, for instance, Goffman 1981; Butler 1990; Hall and Du Gay 1996; Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 1997; Blommaert 2005). That is, we cannot see identity as an essential feature of individuals, but as a bundle of processes and practices. We also need to pluralize 'identity', and start from the assumption that people do not 'have' *one* identity, but *perform* a *repertoire* of identities by means of resources they have acquired and have at their disposal for such purposes. Language, forms and norms of communication, genres and styles all belong to that complex of resources, and while none of those resources alone is enough to generate a particular identity, none of them can be overlooked in explaining patterns of identity production. Third, we have to understand that identities are dynamic and change-

able, and that people invest considerable amounts of energy in modifying and changing their identities in relation to other people and different contexts. Fourth, from this it follows that we should not think of identity just as something that is produced by someone as an isolated self-sufficient entity; we also need to consider its uptake and response from others, for identity is dialogical. And, finally, although the performative, plural, dynamic and dialogical character of identity may be at odds with lay discourses and self-perceptions which stress singularity and stability ('I haven't been *myself* lately'), we need to accept that all of this is *normal*, and indeed a core characteristic of the social processes we observe and examine. With these general and also widely subscribed to remarks in mind, we can now engage with the particular field we want to address here: the late modern jungle of internet identities.

2 Virtually real identities

Internet identities and online self-presentation have recently attracted more and more academic attention (see, e.g., Turkle 1995; Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimmons 2002; Ellison, Heino and Gibbs 2006; Leppänen 2007; Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin 2008). In online environments, we have to 'write ourselves into being' (Sundén 2003) – or, as danah boyd[3] (2009: 145) puts it: 'One cannot simply "be" online; one must make one's presence visible through explicit and structured actions.' In practice, having to write oneself into being means that on many forums, one can start from scratch, and write into being the kind of being one wants to be. Here we of course encounter differences between *anonymous* and *nonymous* sites for identity construction: for instance a social network site such as Facebook is a nonymous site; users present themselves there, in many if not most cases, with their real name, with a picture of themselves attached to that name to further authenticate their 'real' identity. On anonymous sites, we perhaps see more room for manoeuvring and identity play – we are for instance able to present ourselves with a self-invented user name. Nonymous sites, however, should by no means be seen as limiting the creative mobilization of different identity repertoires, for apart from selecting what information one wants to present of oneself, which aspects of one's identity to highlight and which ones to conceal, one is also to a certain extent free to choose one's audience, for instance in the case of Facebook, one's 'Friends' (see also Gershon 2010: 174–179). The audience one constructs for one's identity performance also has an effect on what is presented and what is not, for the kind of identity one wants to perform has to be authenticated and ratified by those observing the performance. Nevertheless, what having to write oneself into being means is that because of this 'have to' – this obligation – we must experiment with different identity repertoires. We

[3] danah boyd does not use capitals in writing her name. We adopt this preference throughout the paper.

have to write ourselves into being, and for this purpose we mobilize different resources – genres, styles, discourses, and so on – that we have at our disposal (see e.g. Leppänen et al. 2009).

An upshot of this, of course, is that in online environments we encounter what Naomi S. Baron (2008) has referred to as the 'on my best day' phenomenon. In the (at least to some extent) disembodied world of virtual identities, the identity written into being does not need to correspond to the corporeal self and its material conditions. The specific environment of the internet compels us towards the use of *certain types of* identity resources. It is naturally clear that *selective self-presentation* and identity work also takes place 'offline'– we need to manoeuvre different audiences and different contexts in our everyday lives all the time (and it is noteworthy that for instance Goffman's [1959] work has been applied to studying online environments too). However, in online environments the scarcity of clues one's audience often has for determining the authenticity of one's identity claims – i.e. whether the claims to certain identities correspond to the corporeal self behind the computer screen and its material conditions – further facilitates selective self-presentation and creativity. In contrast to 'offline' social relationships, which derive much of their meaning from their history and context, people often enter internet platforms with no history, or they perform to an audience they have specifically found or summoned for a certain performance to take place.

Internet identities written into being can also be conceptualized on the axis of visibility-invisibility. One can choose the arenas on which one wishes to display oneself and write oneself into being: where to be seen, with whom ('who are my Friends, and what does that suggest about me and my identity'; see e.g. Walther et al. 2008), and with what sort of identity claims, both implicit and explicit. One can again make oneself invisible by choosing to stop engagement with these arenas, and move to (an)other one(s) – perhaps those which allow for more freedom in terms of identity construction. If nonymity becomes a burden, there is also the possibility of writing oneself into being with an alias, or an avatar. In the latter case, one gets both visibility and invisibility: an alias or an avatar will do the identity work, be visible, while one's own name and face can remain invisible. That is, the substance of what is one's identity can be crafted using all kinds of resources for making things either appear, come into being, or disappear.

All this of course comes in a convenient wrapping of an ideology of individual freedom and liberty. Given its nature, and the opportunities it provides for social action, the internet can be seen as a space in which people (and not only young ones) can experiment with new and different forms of self-presentation, engagement with others, and forms of community in what is often experienced as a space of unrestricted creativity. While this range of new opportunities can give the impression of a chaotic and limitless universe of human social creativity, it is useful to draw attention to the enormous degree of stability, and even predictability, that we see through all this. Stability online takes many forms; there are explicit and implicit rules

of conduct that we have to follow – at least if we want to make our identity endeavours successful in the sense of being accepted and authorized by others inhabiting the same online world – and architectural constraints to be negotiated.

Acknowledging the stabilities and normativities is not to deny the fact that the range of new genres that the internet offers us means increasing possibilities for identity and community formation – here we only have to think of the emergence of blogging as a format for the creation of all sorts of worlds that were previously unimaginable. However, identities are performed *within* these genres, and genres themselves are normative – not a case of anything goes, at least if one wants to make oneself understood and accepted. The emergence of new environments and new genres may give us the illusion of increased freedom, for in new environments norms emerge and those appropriating these environments and employing the new genres bring about the stabilization of certain practices and behaviours and thus participate in the creation of norms. Yet, users themselves – despite what they may think – are not the (only) norm setters: communicative acts, self-presentation and social relationships need to be managed and manoeuvred within certain parameters (see boyd 2001; Killoran 2003; Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic 2004; Herring and Paolillo 2006; Lanier 2010 for different perspectives).

All of this is also very consequential: careless self-presentations may come back to haunt one later in life – youthful misjudgements in self-presentation may still be accessible years afterwards to for instance future employers searching for information on a potential employee. With online environments, we also 'run the risk of being taken out of context' (boyd 2008), and things said and done for certain communicative and identity purposes can be recontextualized elsewhere, for completely different purposes. Identity work carried out in online environments can be stored and used for other(identity) purposes later and, consequently, as an effect of this *archive function* of the internet, we have *archontic power* (Derrida 1996): that is, there are (invisible) others who are in a position to collect, classify and interpret information provided by us, hence exercising power on us and the online 'archive' we construct for and of ourselves (see also e.g. Richardson and Hessey 2009 for a discussion on Facebook as a way of archiving the self; also O'Hara, Tuffield and Shadbolt 2009; Weisbuch, Ivcevic and Ambady 2009). This is also when the internet becomes a late-modern panopticon (Foucault 1995), allowing for observation, surveillance and information-gathering – without those who are being observed and of whom information is being gathered necessarily being aware of it.

A further complication in online identity work is that in many ways we have to comply with ready-made identity formats. In many virtual environments, becoming someone means writing oneself into being according to pre-selected identity markers such as the familiar A/S/L (age-sex-location) grid (e.g. boyd 2001). This means that part of our identity work is already laid out for us, and that the more subtle means we have for identity construction offline are not available for us. Further, with such identity markers we often also become attached to a certain physical body in

time and space which is in apparent contradiction with the idea of freedom and liberty online to be who one wants to be in the way one wants to be. Although it can be suggested that such ready-made identity formats facilitate communication and interaction, the motivation for them is of course in many cases economic. That is, our identity work can be used by (invisible)others for marketing and other purposes which may have nothing to do with the original purpose for which the online identity was constructed (boyd 2001). Facebook users, for instance, are not only making identity statements to their visible audience ('Friends'), but also to invisible parties who want to sell their products and services – hence for example the phenomenon of gender-specific advertising that those presenting their gender in their profile get (see also Jespers 2010).

Thus, while our first impression of virtual identity processes may be that of bewildering diversity and freedom, a closer look yields a somewhat different picture: rules are designed and followed, people follow explicit and implicit norms and find themselves faced with non-negotiable platforms, often with unforeseen consequences. This is also when the 'virtual' becomes 'real': a part of real economic, social, cultural and political processes of evaluation, stratification and control. Ideologies of freedom and creativity, revolving around the presumed 'virtual' nature of internet spaces, obscure this fundamental reality of what goes on there. Although Tsui's (2003: 66) view that 'rather than being a technology of freedom, the internet is well on its way to becoming a technology of control' it is not, as we have seen, the whole story; we have to be mindful of the constraints that are included in the neat package of freedom. We shall next illustrate this point with two examples from emerging internet (sub)cultures in China.

3 Creativity within limits: Two cases from China

We should start our exploration of the limitations with a more general point concerning constraints. What we wish to illustrate here is the kinds of restraints people are confronted with within different online environments. But we should start a bit further back, and consider who exactly are these people with the privilege to engage in the new 'virtual' identity practices.

According to a report by the state-run China Internet Network Information Center (2010), the number of internet users in China by June 2010 had reached 420 million. The speed with which the number of Chinese internet users (or 'netizens', as they are called) has increased is quite remarkable: between the end of 2009 and June 2010, there has been a reported increase of 36 million users (China Internet Network Information Center 2010). In June 2010, the Chinese Government reported its determination by the year 2015 to increase the number of those with internet access to 45 percent of the population (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2010). The internet is also becoming an important tool for personal

expression and public participation in China, and its potential in bringing about social change and enabling and facilitating organized forms of political action should not be overlooked (e.g. Yang 2003a; Wang and Hong 2010).

It seems that more and more people in China do have internet access, but the 'technologies of freedom' are not available for everyone. For instance, geographical distribution of access is uneven: those living in urban spaces are more likely to enjoy the availability of the new forms of identity and community building than those living in rural areas, and those living in western China are less privileged in terms of internet access than their fellow citizens in eastern parts of the country (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2010). Thus, when it comes to the opportunities for new technologically mediated identities, obviously there are haves and have-nots already in terms of access to the resources for realizing these opportunities. However, this does not mean that these opportunities are totally out of reach for people living on the margins of societies. This becomes clear with our first case[4] – a rapper from Enshi, China (a remote rural area in Central-Western China) who can be considered as someone absolutely marginal in multiple senses of the word and yet has access to opportunities provided by the internet.

His personal trajectory is easily summarized. He is an educational underachiever and a school dropout who rebelled against the educational system. Something of a juvenile delinquent, he has been involved in street crime, and has been in prison several times. Apart from a small circle of friends, from a similar disadvantaged background, he does not have an extensive social network. With his record, he is also basically unemployable. What we can conclude from this brief biography is that we are looking at a case of someone who is short of almost every form of capital (Bourdieu 1986): the economic, cultural and social resources he has at his disposal for building meaningful group belongings and social networks, for improving his mobility and, consequently, for accumulating further resources, seem scarce. The material reality of this rapper thus seems to be that of someone socially very invisible, but this is only *one part* of his lived reality. He does live with his parents, in a small bedroom with hardly any comforts. But he has *a compute*r connected to the internet, and this is where the other part of his existence starts.

This underachiever may not appear to be in possession of a lot of social capital, but through his musical endeavours, he has been able to generate social networks and visibility for himself. Music itself of course functions as a kind of a (sub)cultural glue in the lives of many people around the world, and our underachiever has been able to get some status for himself by engaging in the global phenomenon that is hip-hop. However, what we also know about our rapper is that he does not perform or tour much – his visibility is confined to the internet.

Online, we see him appear in many different forums, most notably *www.51.com* and *www.yyfc.com*, which can be characterized as a social network site, and a

[4] This case is based on fieldwork by Xuan Wang. See also Wang (2011).

MySpace-kind-of-platform, or a music-DIY site, respectively. On these forums he promotes his music, builds social networks, is part of communities of likeminded people and, even though it may be surprising in the case of such an under achiever, he even has 'followers' (and even became a topic for research in a Dutch university). On different online forums, through the different multimodal resources available, he is able to write another kind of self into being. For this rapper from Enshi, China, the internet enables the deployment of identity repertoires otherwise not within his reach. Here we could apply the idea of the 'online disembodiment thesis' (e.g. Campbell 2004), according to which 'online' and 'offline' worlds and experiences can be different and separated, and corporeal, 'offline' bodies and realities do not necessarily matter online. In a sense, this is what happens here: an underachiever can become someone with status; someone with a legitimate identity within an essentially global hip-hop network in spite of being locally marginalized; someone whose existence as a certain kind of self is authenticated by his followers and others with whom he interacts online.

However, that is not the whole story and, unfortunately, our rapper does not have unlimited freedom in establishing himself as a certain kind of self. His identity repertoires may have expanded with the internet and he is able to escape the material locality he is in, but these new opportunities also come with constraints. The first constraint we can observe is quite a practical and also a major one: his carefully crafted identity work may disappear anytime. Websites may be shut down. That is the case at least with *www.51.com* – a site that has more than 100 million users, therefore by no means a minor social tool – which was shut down for undeclared reasons earlier in 2010. If the site is blocked, its more than 100 million users are not able to download music, interact with each other and work on their social networks and identities. The freedom of our rapper and these other users is limited.

China proclaims itself to be a 'harmonious' – i.e. homogeneous and highly normative – society, and does not approve of the dissemination of 'harmful information' online (see e.g. Zittrain and Edelman 2003; MacKinnon 2008, 2009; Zhang and Wang 2010). Hence the limitations for someone like the Enshi rapper, who on the surface seems quite 'harmless'. He is, after all, only broadening his identity horizons and building a community of music enthusiasts. However, he is part of a subculture, and his specific art form (hip-hop) can also be viewed negatively as too 'Western' and not an authentic part of Chinese culture. He also engages in asking provocative questions online, for instance concerning the freedom of speech in China, and some of the lyrics for his songs that he posts online feature profanities. In no time at all, these things – which are clearly identity statements, and help construct an image of someone who is not only part of a subculture, but also outspoken, bold and critical – may disappear.

We can safely say that at least some of the rules and norms the users of *www.51.com* have to comply with are by no means implicit. On the contrary, identity

and community formation are literally policed in a very explicit way, and this is clear from the presence of the Chinese Cyberpolice on the site (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The presence of Cyberpolice at *www.51.com*

The Cyberpolice monitor online behaviour and the posting of 'harmful information' – 'wrong' kinds of identity statements, 'wrong' forms of interaction and relationship formation – have undesired consequences (see e.g. Qiu 1999; MacKinnon 2008). Posts, messages and whole sites, along with certain selves written into being and made visible, may disappear.[5] What the Enshi rapper is forced to do, then, is to migrate from one site of engagement to another, and whichever site happens to be fully functioning will be his main forum. So essentially, he needs to be able to do two things: be mindful of what he says – mindful of the kinds of repertoires and resources he mobilizes – and be ready to be a nomadic user, and move from one forum to another. The rapper clearly benefits from the identity opportunities the internet can provide. It allows him to become more widely recognized and to break out of Enshi. But this he does within a policed internet environment, in which his opportunities need to be carefully checked against the risks of this enterprise. An additional facet of this is that he is also transgressing rules he may not even know to exist, and in this he is not alone.

We can witness a similar dialectics of opportunities and constraints within the budding and in many ways already blooming Chinese blogging culture, which is our second example.[6] Blogging in general has become hugely popular and also increasingly influential during the past decade or so. Many efforts have been made to characterize this new genre (e.g. Herring et al. 2005), but it seems to escape definition. As Miller and Shepherd (2004: n.p.) put it, 'Blogs can be both public and intensely personal in possibly contradictory ways. They are addressed to everyone and at the same time to no one.' That is, blogs can be characterized as highly personal – as a late-modern form of diary (e.g. McNeill 2003; Rak 2005) – while at the same

[5] A very recent case being the internet censorship following the announcement of the dissident Liu Xiaobo as winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

[6] This case is based on fieldwork by Caixia Du.

time they can be extremely public in nature. Audiences can also be unexpected and unsuspected. There might be a familiar circle of readers, consisting of, say, friends, family, or colleagues, but a blogger may also have (and all this unassumingly) a very wide audience, and members of this audience can naturally be physically located anywhere in the world provided with internet access.

Blogging can also be viewed within the framework of the 'new knowledge culture' (Jenkins 2006; see also Lévy 1997), where new types of community, notably in the cyberspace, are formed. To quote Jenkins (2006: 27),

> (…) these new communities are defined through voluntary, temporary and tactical affiliations, reaffirmed through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments. Members may shift from one group to another as their interests and needs change, and they may belong to more than one community at the same time. These communities, however, are held together through the mutual production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge.

These communities, with shared objectives (and here we may think of a range of objectives, be they purely intellectual or concerned with knowledge sharing, or ones with affective functions as well), appear online in many different forms, and a community of bloggers can be viewed as a collective knowledge community. The 'knowledge' exchanged, shared and built upon may be from any sphere of life; even a very superficial exploration of the blogosphere allows one to discover individuals and communities posting on cooking, gardening, sexuality, fashion, eating disorders, and so on. These communities come together through, for instance, blogrolls (i.e. a list of blogs that a blogger may recommend to others by providing links to them) and comments people post on blogs.

The opportunities offered by this new online genre for information, identity and identification are mind-boggling. To take the specific location of China as an example, it is reasonable to suggest that such opportunities used to be centrally managed – identities ascribed to one were more difficult to escape, and the ones introduced as forbidden ones more difficult to perform. However, with the emergence of the internet and blogging as part of it, the expansion of one's identity repertoires is easier, not to mention the implications for collective work and community building (see e.g. Yang 2003b for musings on the cyber-potential for these purposes).

As Jenkins (2006: 29, drawing on Lévy's 1997 work) indeed notes, the new communities emerging may also serve *political* functions, and be instrumental in processes of democratization. To take the case of the Chinese blogging scene as an example (and to risk over-simplification by referring to it as a single entity), the political functions may of course be either the main goal of bloggers, or the side product of blogging on something with no directly observable political meaning. The case we present here is an example of the latter.

To reiterate our point of departure, we do see that blogging means increased opportunities for identity construction and community building. However, as we saw with the case of the Enshi rapper, these opportunities come with restraints. What is seen as 'harmony' in Chinese society entails not saying and doing certain things, not even in the land of freedom that the internet is supposed to be. As the case of the rapper already illustrated, there are consequences for making certain identity statements and trying to employ certain identity repertoires. Blogging makes no exception in this.

This was perhaps most obvious prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when a lot of cleaning – both 'virtual' and 'material' – had to be done to present to the rest of the world a certain kind of China. A harmonious virtual China does not include vulgar language or swear words, and politically dubious statements are naturally seen as threatening. Prior to the Olympics, an internet forum that had been running for about five years was shut down after someone posted a critical comment on their blog on the building of expensive stadiums while great numbers of Chinese were living in poverty. The blog in question was not created for overtly political purposes; it was one on literature – a (sub)cultural forum for likeminded people to share and create knowledge and establish identities. In this case, as in many others, someone's (virtual) life and identity was erased, and the blogger forced to migrate and display his/her identity elsewhere on the internet.

In other cases, we witness increasing individual and collective creativity to manoeuvre through the screening of identities and practices and, ultimately, to avoid erasure. There are CD-ROMs available for unblocking websites that have been closed down, and we are also able to observe astonishing degrees of linguistic creativity from bloggers and other Chinese internet users to make sure that they can avoid control and censorship. In practice this means metaphorical talk, indirect and obscure expressions and the use of homophones for instance to be able to say what one wants for certain identity and communal purposes – as has been the case recently with online discussions on Liu Xiaobo, the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner. Quickly these roundabout ways of expression become shared knowledge among internet users and communities and identity work can remain under construction.

Here we see the precariousness of identities and knowledge communities that exist in the blogosphere: with blogging, audiences can be unexpected, unsuspected and undesired, and the Chinese Cyberpolice is potentially part of the audience. This was the case with our example here: a 'wrong' kind of an identity was displayed by someone, consequently implying the potential formation of a 'wrong' kind of a knowledge community. Mobilizing a political repertoire was a move that required intervention from unsuspected members of the audience monitoring the blogosphere. Identity correction is not always as drastic as it was in this case. Sometimes identity policing is more in the details: single words in blogs become omitted, or more accurately replaced with two stars, which tells the blogger him- or herself as

well as his or her audience that a mistaken kind of an identity had been assumed, and this needed to be rectified.

The Chinese Cyberpolice is effective in its work, for whole blogs can be blocked within hours of posting something that is considered 'harmful' or 'sensitive', and be replaced with the text 'Cherish your life, keep away from blogging' ('珍爱生命，远离博客').[7] The message sent to the blogger as well as to anyone wishing to access the blog is clear, in the sense that an identity has been displayed employing certain repertoires, and perhaps even been authenticated and approved by other internet users, possibly members of the same knowledge community. What remains unclear with this type of intervention from the Cyberpolice and the identity correction they make, is what is addressed here as 'life'. Is it the 'virtual' life of the blogger that is being referred to, or the 'material' life, so to speak, and can we – or should we – in fact make such a distinction? What seems 'virtual' here is in fact very 'real', and the imprisonment of internet activists should be one of the clearest examples of the 'real' nature of all of this.

What is obvious is that the opportunities provided by the internet may be unprecedented, but so are the constraints. What the Chinese cases show us is that internet users are not only monitored from the outside, in what can be described as a late-modern panopticon (Foucault 1995). In addition, and as a consequence, they also embark on self-policing, and the identities that are displayed become not only monitored by others but also by the users themselves. So we witness two kinds of creativity. The first kind is brought about because of the new socio-technical tools available, and it is a very positive development that people can engage in these forms of creativity, identity work and community building. The second kind of creativity, however, is *forced* creativity – to be able to inhabit online environments, certain moves and manoeuvres are necessary, as identities – and whole communities – need to be legitimized and approved of not only by immediate participants but also by invisible others.

4 Conclusions

By way of conclusion, we might want to remind ourselves of the famous 1993 cartoon in *The New Yorker* which has become a kind of a symbolic item in discussions on internet and identity. The cartoon, featuring two dogs, one sitting in front of a computer screen, and the other one on the floor next to it, included the caption 'On the internet, nobody knows you're a dog'. That is how we tend to think about online environments: if you are a man, you may present yourself as a woman; if you are

[7] Interestingly, this Cyberpolice message borrows from the 'real world' traffic police genre – traffic signs in China would use a similar expression when asking people to be cautious and mindful of their actions.

poor, you may present yourself as rich; if you are unhappy, you may still present yourself as happy. We may have the feeling of having another reality to live in – an alternative reality that we can use to complement or replace the 'corporeal' one, if it happens to be unpleasant or insufficient for us. Indeed, sometimes no one needs to know that you are a dog.

However, as we have seen in our discussion here, our online behaviours can be monitored by (often invisible) others, and these others may be interested in knowing whether you are indeed a dog or not – for different economic or political purposes for example. In different online environments we need to, or at least are encouraged to, provide all sorts of demographic details about ourselves, to display our cultural interests and our networks. Scholz (2008: n.p.), in his discussion on what he labels as the 'Web 2.0 ideology', i.e. popular public discourse on the internet and its recent developments, describes the current situation as follows:

> Today, marketers can even learn about the stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves; they are represented in the profiles of our social networking sites. As part of a sea change toward the feasibility and importance of keeping private things private, American youth cares much less about their privacy than users of the Web a decade ago. Today, young people don't mind so much that they share their 'friends lists,' conversations, and navigational habits not only with their acquaintances but also the companies who interpret much of this data. With these firms (and possibly government bodies) as daily confidantes, latent possibilities for total control have opened up.

The online actions Scholz refers to can of course be done for *identity* purposes, and the internet provides opportunities for broadening our identity repertoires (and, to add an important point to Scholz's characterization, not just for American young people). And all this is at present very much part of our lived realities. We now live in an era where imagination has become a social practice (Appadurai 1996); indeed, it 'is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order' (Appadurai 1996: 31). The new socio-technical tools we have at our disposal for imagining identities and communities enable us to conjure up selves that satisfy our desires to be what we want to be, within the kinds of communities we wish to be part of as statements of our identities.

That is, the opportunities for imagining and acting on our imaginings are like nothing we have been able to imagine before, and the scope and significance of opportunities we have for extending our immediate corporeal realities should not be undermined. However, the new technologies of self (Foucault 1988) come with restrictions of the kind we also have not been able to imagine before. Here we have to remind ourselves of some of the features that come with the package that is presented to us in popular media ideologies (i.e. beliefs about and attitudes towards the possible and appropriate uses and functions of different media; see Gershon 2010: 3) as one of unlimited freedom: control, archiving, surveillance and censorship. The

new freedoms for imagining and creating identities are undeniable, but as Lo (2009: 384) puts it: 'For the nation-state, the emergence of new forms of self in the society requires further social surveillance, risk management, and regulations.' Creativity involves transgression, and in societies obsessed with security and stability, transgression is a risk.

The cases presented here are not only anecdotal evidence but they are indicative of larger patterns. There is no need for doomsday scenarios, but the Chinese cases presented here clearly illustrate a point. Identities and communities online are not all about freedom and liberty, and this is not only about what is *legal* or *illegal* as such – norms and rules for communication and identity and community building are also obeyed without explicit legal restrictions. As internet users, we navigate and manoeuvre in different environments, and our navigation and manoeuvring can be complicated by the fact that these environments often come with no histories and sometimes with very little, emergent, contextual cues.

The explicit censorship we come across in the case of China is not the core point here. It is widely known that China limits the use of the internet, and the scope and nature of control may seem like something foreign for internet users elsewhere. But China is not alone in this and by no means the only place where control, screening and profiling happens – in China, we witness *overt* policing of the internet, elsewhere we see it in more covert forms. However, with internet identities we can indeed talk about *repertoires* in the plural, for there is room for manoeuvring, and if one online environment does not satisfy our desires in imagining who we want to be, then there will always be another one that will allow that to happen. The two cases from China presented here are cases of nomadic internet users, of nomadic subjects (to put Braidotti's 1994 term into literal use): users who migrate from one forum to another in search of a place for identity construction that can be confirmed by other subjects, both visible and invisible. What needs to be remembered here is that these late-modern nomadic subjects leave traces of themselves and are controlled by both visible and invisible others, and this also makes identity work more precarious. All this needs to be taken into account in our endeavours to explain the new identity phenomena we encounter: what we now have is new forms of subjectivity and new kinds of life projects – new opportunities for identity repertoires, and new forms of constraint.

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CHAPTER 5

Harmony as language policy in China: An internet perspective

1 Introduction[1]

Whereas language policy at the state or institutional level generally aims for the ideal of harmony and social cohesion by emphasizing normativity and order, everyday language practices at the ground level demonstrate far more features of divergence, heterogeneity, and polycentricity. This is exceedingly so in view of the current stage of globalization and its outcome of 'superdiversity' (Blommaert and Rampton 2011). Digital mediascapes, for instance, open up a new, unprecedentedly complex, and less controllable space in which effects of formal policies are accompanied, de-centred, and transformed in a variety of sociolinguistic settings (e.g. Pietikäinen and Piirainen-Marsh 2009; Androutsopoulos and Juffermans 2014). This raises the question of how harmony, or any state-sponsored social project, is discursively negotiated and (co)-constructed in and as social reality, as much as how language policy and perhaps society at large may be better conceptualized and understood when grounded in such reality.

The above observations are relevant to the current paper in two ways. On the one hand, they raise broad concerns about language policy research as theory and methodology, and they point us towards calls for a paradigmatic shift in this field (Ricento 2006; Shohamy 2006; McCarty 2011; Davis 2014): from a traditional focus on the formal policy (policy-as-text), often in the strict sense of the term, as a set of official documents, directives, and regulations produced by authorities such as the state, to a Hymesian (1980, 1996) ethnographic perspective to policy (policy-as-discourse) as dynamic, multifaceted, and situated social practices. Following this shift, and drawing on Foucault's notion of police, disciplinary power, and governmentality, Blommaert et al. (2009) suggest that language policy should be seen in terms of 'policing', i.e. processes of rational production and management of a normative structure that involves various socio-political actors and institutions with unequally distributed agency. This locates language policy in complexes of ideology and webs of cultural meanings and, as such, in constellations of micro-discursive practices that are anchored in different and often conflictual ideologies, indexical and constitutive

[1] This chapter was first published as X. Wang, K. Juffermans and C. Du (2016). Harmony as language policy in China: An internet perspective. *Language Policy* (online). DOI 10.1007/s10993-015-9374-y

of the macro-patterns of normativity and order. In such constellations, the state functions as but one of a range of possible centres of norms.

On the other hand, the questions of harmony and language policy draw attention to China as both a comparative context (to African and other contexts) and an interesting case in its own right. Harmony and language policy go hand in hand in China. Evolving from a well-entrenched classical Confucian ideal, 'harmony' has in recent years become a proper name that stands for an explicit discourse on the rationalization, maintenance, and enforcement of stability and order by the state in reaction to the rapid economic-political changes and sociocultural diversifications resulting from the country's modernization and globalization processes. This can be seen in the prevalent slogan of Harmonious Society championed by former President Hu Jintao. Not only the formal policies of language — which advocates a monoglot standard ideology (cf. Silverstein 1996) — but almost all recent official policies in China, have invariably adopted the state motif of 'harmony'. This has impacts on the way language and communication 'ought to' be and are actually practiced in (at least) the public sphere in China, including in its flourishing online environment. Harmony, therefore, is a crucial aspect and driving force of language policy and policing in the context of China.

This paper seeks an ethnographic understanding of harmony via and, thus, as language policy in China. As stated, we use ethnography in the Hymesian sense as a theoretical perspective rather than a mere method of social and linguistic inquiry. In this we follow Lillis's (2008) discussion of three levels of ethnography, i.e. a first and minimal level of ethnography conceived as talk around texts, a second level as full-fledged methodology comprising multiple data sources and a sustained and interactive engagement in the contexts of production and the communities of practice, and a third and deeper level of ethnography as interpretive theorizing (cf. Blommaert 2005; Rampton 2007). These three levels of ethnography progressively narrow the ontological gap between text and context in literacy research and discourse analysis more generally. Our use of ethnography needs to be appreciated at this third and deeper level, i.e. as an ethnographic-sociolinguistic study of harmony as a complex object of analysis.

In what follows, we begin with a historical analysis of 'harmony' as a distinct traditional Chinese ideal that gradually finds its new expressions through policy in contemporary China. We will then focus on language practices surrounding 'harmony' emerging from the internet in China, a discursive space and site of policing that is highly diverse while also heavily contested and policed through stringent measurement of censorship and sensitization of communication (e.g. Tsui 2003; Yang 2009; MacKinnon 2011). From this perspective of the internet, we will show empirically that although the state is arguably the strongest stakeholder in implementing the policy of harmony — or, better, harmonization — the actual processes of harmonization through policing online develop in detailed, multidirectional, and unpredictable rather than abstract, linear, or monofocal ways. The outcomes of such processes are,

paradoxically, alternative ideologies of harmony as well as non-normative use of language. We will discuss the implications of these observations and our understanding of harmony as language policy — with reference to China and Chinese — in the final part of the paper.

2 Harmony as a Confucian ideal

'Harmony'' originates from *he* (和),[2] a word celebrated by Chinese people as one of the core symbols of their cultural essence, alongside words such as 'fortune', 'longevity', and 'luck'. It is important to make clear at the onset that when we speak of harmony in a Chinese context, the use of the term conjures up a distinctive ideological load seated in over two millennia of Chinese history and Confucian traditions.

He is one of the central tenets of the Confucian system of ethical philosophy and political governmentality (cf. Yao 2000). The Confucian doctrines of *he* are incorporated by generations of Chinese in conceptualizing norms and orders that inform individual behaviours in relation to the moral self, the family, the state, and other levels of society. In this sense, *he* represents a specific set of historically enregistered and internalized discourses about what is meant by harmony, why harmony is important, and how to achieve it socially and politically. This is a crucial point for understanding the significance of harmony in terms of (language) policy in China today.

Although today *he* is invariably credited to Confucianism, its genesis predates Confucius (551-479 BCE). Li (2006), for instance, traces its existence back to as far as the earliest dynasties of Shang (16th–17th century BCE) and Zhou (1066–256 BCE). He observes that the concept gradually evolved from its initial meaning of describing how different sounds or flavours respond to one another in ancient music and food rituals, to an aesthetical, ethical, philosophical, political, and metaphysical ideal that embraces harmony as the optimal way of constructing society and cosmos (Li 2006). It is believed that Confucius was the first to synthesize earlier thoughts about harmony and placed *he* at the centre of his philosophy. The previously variegated ideas were quoted and appropriated by Confucius and his followers to promote the social and political significance of harmony. *He* was held as 'the highest ideal' (Li 2006: 588) of what was later to become Confucianism, one of the most influential thoughts and cultural traditions in China (and other Asian-Confucian societies).

What is interesting about harmony, according to Li (2006, 2008) and others, are the distinctions and dynamics between sameness and difference it defines. In the

[2] The key Chinese terms and expressions in this paper are written in italicized *Pinyin*, the official phonetic system based on the standard Chinese variety of *Putonghua* for transcribing *Hanzi* (Chinese characters) in the People's Republic of China. Forms of Hanzi are offered when a terminology appears for the first time and/or for the purpose of clarification. Tone markers of Pinyin are shown only when they are relevant to the analysis.

Confucian classics *The Analects*, *he* was a crucial criterion for *junzi* ('the real gentleman') — *junzi he er butong, xiaoren tong er buhe* ('The junzi harmonizes but does not seek sameness, whereas [an unscrupulous man] seeks sameness but does not harmonize', Li 2006: 586). *He er butong* ('harmony with distinction') is a popular saying people still use today to defend their stance and settle disputes. What is inscribed in these lines is the differentiation between harmony and sameness, between valid harmony based on the acknowledgement of difference versus sameness, and invalid harmony, based on the diminishing of difference; it also states the moral-ethical categorizations of harmony for which the order of good and bad, appropriate and inappropriate, is negotiated and established.

Such dynamics are crucial to the understanding of *he*. *He* does not equal *tong* (sameness), even though sameness is an important ingredient of harmony and must be valued and maintained 'at an appropriate level' (Li 2006: 590). Not any kind of sameness leads to harmony. Li contends that the Confucian belief rejects the 'overpresence' of sameness and deems it as being in danger of imposing uniformity and disharmony. Difference, on the other hand, is a precondition and cornerstone of harmony because *he* is essentially about the harmonious, *appropriate* interplays of differences. Harmony presupposes the entailment of difference as tension, conflict, and 'strife': the process through which harmony is negotiated and sought. As Li (2006: 592) argues, 'harmony is not only a state but, more importantly, a process, disharmony is necessarily present during the process of harmonization.'

Hence *he* entails *hexie* ('harmony'), *heping* ('peace') and *hejie* ('reconciliation'), an equilibrium that is only acceptable and appropriate through strife and the harmonization of sameness and difference — managed diversity, so to speak. This includes the management of different roles and the knowledge of 'ought-ness' of behaviours based on the roles one assumes in society — what is called 'rites' or *li* (礼) in Confucianism. *Li* refers not only to ceremonial rituals performed on specific occasions, it is one of the five basic virtues (i.e. benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness) in the Confucian ethics, and is deemed 'the way of humanity and the way of Heaven' (Li 2006: 588), of behaving oneself as well as managing society.

Harmony operates on five hierarchically interrelated scale-levels (Li 2008). On the elementary level is the individual-personal awareness and desire to self-cultivate one's internal harmonization as a moral duty to the keeping of order in society; this is the foundation of a moral society. The second level concerns 'a nexus of human relationship' (Li 2008: 429), namely, the five major interpersonal/ethical relationships in which the individual self exists: between ruler and minister, parent and child, husband and wife, or between siblings, and between friends. The next level of harmony is to do with the governance politics of the state. Harmonious governance is to bring about order in society through the virtuous functioning of government officials rather than penal laws. The fourth level involves promoting harmony as peaceful coexistence beyond the state borders, in the world. And finally, at the most funda-

mental level, harmony is applicable as a universal law and a cosmological order generated by the interactive process of balancing human, nature, and society. The ultimate goal is to realize *taihe* ('grand harmony') throughout the cosmos, which derives from harmony at the lower levels.

Harmony, thus, is a carefully constructed normative complex in Confucianism that relies on the cultivation of prescribed virtues and maintenance of morality and ethics. It provides an early model of humanist ideal of organizing life at multiple levels and achieving desired balance and order. To this end, differences and conflicts are regulated and controlled, through strife between individuality and collectiveness, by means of stipulated norms and rules.

Returning to the issue of policy and policing, it is not difficult to see that the Confucian ideal of harmony, especially with a long historical trajectory of being the state-sponsored political and ethical system since Emperor Han Wudi's rule (156–87 BCE), can function as a coercive force on people's perceptions about 'how to be' or 'how to act' and the normative organization of society. This ideal, as we will see next, is continuously intertextualized, updated, and reinvented — eventually, established as policy — in tune with the development of a modern China.

2.1 The reinvention of harmony

As already mentioned, 'harmony' or *hexie* (和谐) has recently become a prominent discourse pattern in China, embodied in pervasive expressions like Harmonious Society initiated by the government. If one travels to China nowadays, one would find an overwhelming presence of the word *hexie* in the public sphere: on the TV, in newspapers, on public transport, in classrooms and offices, and on street billboards and banners. Blommaert's (2010: 142ff) insightful account of the 'harmonious golf' sign in a Beijing street, about how the national political slogan of harmony is superimposed onto the global corporate discourse of golf, offers a poignant example.

This is an arduous comeback of Confucianism after its marginalization in China since the early twentieth century. This return signals a discursive shift centring upon the Confucian 'jargon' of harmony, the revamping and redeploying of which reflect the state attempts to establish new orders as its engagement with globalization processes deepens. Harmony, in this sense, serves as a strong contemporary rhetoric that dominates the order of meaning making in China, as seen e.g. in the official policy of 'language harmony' (*yuyan hexie*).

Understanding the discourse of harmony in China's language policy certainly benefits from insights into the philosophical-epistemic dimension of *he* embedded in the Confucian traditions (as examined above). Meanwhile, this understanding needs to be situated in the present framework of talking and behaving that is emerging under/in the name of *hexie* in response to processes of globalization. To establish this framework is to further investigate the social-historical dimension of *hexie* in which harmony is a discourse of cultural and philosophical tradition as well as an

indicator of wider social and political changes in the light of China's modernization and globalization. We will see that *hexie* involves considerable discursive shifts, not just a reactivation of *he*.

2.2 New Confucianism

The discursive shifts of *hexie* are by no means random. This becomes clear when we consider it as part of the successive discursive shifts about Confucianism unfolded over the course of the last century. Prior to that, Confucianism stayed more or less as a stable, mainstream value system in a largely enclosed Chinese society since the Han Dynasty. The downfall of the last monarchy Qing and the incoming of Western ideologies, such as capitalism, liberalism, and communism in the early 1900s, effectively ended the orthodoxy of Confucianism in China. A new generation of intellectuals emerging from the May Fourth Movement (ca. 1919) denounced the hegemony centuries' political manipulations of Confucianism had exerted, especially over the equality, freedom, and creativity of women and youth. Having said that, a total breakaway and disregard of Confucianism, at least of its emblematic and intellectual values, also provoked devastating identity dilemmas for a new-born nation-state. In fact, Confucianism was never far off the scene. As Dirlik (1995: 234) asserts, 'These same intellectuals [who decried Confucianism] would, in ensuing years, engage in efforts to find some reconciliation between "Western" and "Chinese" values, out of which would emerge what has come to be called "New Confucianism."'

New Confucianism is an umbrella term that captures the ongoing neo-conservative transformation and reinvention of the Confucian traditions over the past decades, of which three generations of exponents have developed (Makeham 2003; Fan 2011). Over these generations, the status, focus, and impact of Confucianism shifted with the ebb and flow of economic and political conditions (Dirlik 1995; Bell 2006; Louie 2011). In a nutshell, the first generation (1921–1949) of the three returned to Confucianism in search for a sense of self from within a crisis-ridden China, amidst desires to depart from its condemned 'feudal' past. The second one (1950–1979) was led by scholars outside Mainland China which was then occupied by the Cultural Revolution and the consequent ideological distancing from Confucianism in favour of Maoist communism and nationalism. This period was engaged mainly in dialogues between Oriental-Chinese Confucianism and Western-Kantian philosophy. The most recent decades (1980–present) saw a pan-China 'rediscovery' of Confucianism (Bell 2006) accompanying the East Asian economic booms in the 1980s, as — not so much its content, but — 'the evaluation of that content with respect to the question of modernity' had changed (Dirlik 1995: 236). In this, newest wave of Confucianism, China re-emerged as its centre and leading advocate, while embarking on the post-Mao 'reform and opening-up' course and reengaging with wider processes of globalization. It is this third phase of Confucianist 'renaissance' (Fan 2011) that gives rise to the current political discourse of harmony.

2.3 The harmonious society

China's reengagement with globalization since 1978 has hugely enhanced the country's economic-political power and, consequently, its social diversification and re-stratification. China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, and in merely 10 years, its GDP had increased almost five times and it became the second-largest economy in the world. Notwithstanding, the inequality of wealth in China is also growing at an alarming speed, with its Gini coefficient index reaching 0.73 in 2012.[3] Reclaiming and revaluing Confucianism under such conditions becomes once again necessary and all the more important. For one thing, it reasserts the part of the cultural and national identity that China had been alienated from under the dominance of imported ideologies and self-inflicted disruptions. For another, this re-forges a domestic political-ideological framework that can appeal to nationalistic nostalgia and, at the same time, re-establish order in a rapidly changing and restructuring society. It is in such a context that the Chinese government initiated the latest wave of New Confucianism by reintroducing *hexie* as the spearhead jargon, calling into question the need of a new order legitimatized by redeploying Confucianism.

Harmonious Society (和谐社会, *hexie shehui*) was first put forth in September 2004, when former President Hu Jintao gave a speech on 'building a harmonious socialist society' at the fourth plenary session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. This was propounded in the following year when CPC's sixth plenary session passed the strategic document of 'Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's Resolution on Major Issues of Building a Socialist Harmonious Society'. According to President Hu, a harmonious society is 'a scientific development concept' consisting of six elements: democratic rule of law, fairness and justness, honesty and friendliness, vitality and liveliness, stability and orderliness, and coexistence of man and nature. It is urged that a harmonious, i.e. orderly, political environment and social structure with regained morale are needed in China to address the deepening social divide, discontents, and tensions, as well as to fill the perceived ideological and 'moral vacuum' left by the Cultural Revolution (Louie 2011).

Harmonious Society bespeaks an effort in building a culturalist-humanist image of the state by re-cherishing the core Chinese values encoded in the Confucian concept of *hexie* while turning it into a new rhetoric 'to react and redress an increasingly less balanced and less fair domestic landscape' (Yu 2008: 123) and, ultimately, to reassert the state's authority. In this context, *hexie* becomes a metonym for a self-defendable form of power and coercion that imposes certain order and normativity. This re-

[3] The Gini coefficient index measures income inequality, with \0.25 generally considered the most equal and [0.6 the most unequal; 0.4 is the internationally recognized warning line. See *People's Daily* article 'Report Suggests Top 1 % Families Own Over 1/3 of The Country's Wealth' (http://society.people. com.cn/n/2014/0725/c1008-25345140.html).

centring of harmony, as we will see next, is also reflected in the way language policy in China has been (re)formulated and expanded, incorporating *hexie* as a major trope and motif.

2.4 Language harmony

The monoglot standard of Putonghua and its hegemonic dominance over other Chinese varieties has evolved out of sociohistorical practices (Dong 2010) and can thus be seen as a continual process of harmonization in the sense of Confucianism. The hierarchical order as harmony in the domain of language use is made more transparent and justifiable as it merges with the political discourse of social harmony in recent years. This merge is illustrated in the official poster used in 2009 for the twelfth annual National Putonghua Promotion Week organized by the Chinese National Commission on Language and Script Work (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Harmony: Love the motherland language and script; build a harmonious language life (poster of the 2009 National Putonghua Promotion Week)

In this poster, the layers of significance of harmony are semiotized in: (a) *hexie* as an oversized word placed in the top-centre, announcing the theme of the state-led language campaign; (b) the recursive pattern of *hexie* as the background, inscribed in the calligraphic font 'seal' (*zhuan*, originated from the Confucian period over 2000 years ago) and written vertically — an aesthetic and archaic organization of semiotic features indexing *hexie*'s historical and cultural roots — which frames the poster as well as, symbolically, the language campaign; and (c) two sentences that spell out the

updated (sociolinguistic) meaning of *hexie* in modern-day China: 'love the motherland language and script; build a harmonious language life.'

Government propaganda like this has been in practice ever since the founding of the PRC to install a monoglossic order in society. This order is not only about which language varieties are more prestigious than others (e.g. Putonghua compared to dialect or other languages), but also about the different and unequal degrees of legitimacy and authenticity certain language variety as social capital may have (or not) to afford people voice (X. Wang 2012). Regulation of language is regulation of voice (Blommaert 2005; Juffermans and Van der Aa 2013), thus, a form of policing through formal policy. The first language law passed in China in 2000, the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese, is an example and also a pretext of the Harmonious Society discourse that followed a few years later.

What can be seen in the above poster is that the policy of a monoglossic order is being relabelled with *hexie*, an ideal that emphasizes order and normativity as appropriateness by virtue, and, thus, becomes a *bona fide* voice. Such a voice is further sanctioned by the nationalist sentiment (the call to love the motherland language and script) aroused by Confucianism from which *hexie* originates, and is seen as iconic of Chinese history and culture (the archaic styling of the word *hexie*). Any voice implying an alternative, heteroglossic order is, hence, against harmony and morally inappropriate, and may be regarded as an act of disharmonization and subversion.

Sociolinguists in China (e.g. Feng 2007; Zhou 2006; Zhang and Xie 2010) also argue that maintaining harmony in language use is an indispensable aspect of constructing a harmonious society. They reason that the realization of language harmony relies on people's awareness of the norms of conduct and willingness and 'sensibility' in conforming to such norms (Feng and Zhang 2006). It is suggested that nonstandard, non-normative, and innovative uses of language across domains, such as commercial language, literary works, and online communication, all risk violating and harming linguistic and social harmony (Feng 2007). Following this logic, harmony has to do as much with self-compliance of normalization as with top-down policing and active interventions of state power.

So far, we have discussed the notion of 'harmony' with respect to *he*, in the classical Confucian sense, and *hexie*, in its evolvement into a political discourse through the reinvention of Confucianism in China. Taken together, these provide ethnographic contextualizations necessary for us to dissect the meanings of harmony as observable texts and practices in China. In the following section, we examine harmony as processes of policing in China's virtual space. We will demonstrate that, alongside the state policing, there are considerable non-state-oriented interactions and influences from grassroots users of the internet. Such practices imply that 'language harmony' is not only about policies and legislations of language *per se*, but more about the policing of voice and the validity of using certain linguistic features to express oneself.

3 The (dis)harmonious Chinese internet

Recent development of digital technologies in China has created the world's largest population of internet users, or 'netizens'. According to the latest report by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, *https://cnnic.com.cn/AU/MediaC/rdxw/2014/201407/t20140723_47471.htm*), the government agency responsible for internet affairs, in 2014 China's netizens exceeded 632 million (compared to 60 million in 2002), with the internet penetration rate reaching 46.9%. In addition, 'emerging mobile applications [… alongside traditional PC] have met the requirements for internet access in an all-around way and facilitated full network-based life of internet users.' The socio-political implications of this are immense regardless of the still unequal distribution of digital infrastructure and the urban– rural divide.

The internet has profoundly transformed the way people access information and communicate. It offers unprecedented potential of freedom and democracy to authoritarian states and exposes its citizens to alternative norms, values, and resources that were unavailable before. With the new technology, the speed and velocity of such changes are extraordinary, posing new challenges to the existing social order. One of the main challenges is related to superdiversity — new forms of diversity that make use of the internet either as a space and medium of production, or as a tool for inventing new resources of meaning making (e.g. Varis and Wang 2011; X. Wang 2012; Velghe 2014). What's more, the internet allows wider, more active and democratic participation in economic and socio-political discussions and public civic life at the grassroots level (Zhou 2005; Yang 2009). In the case of China, however, all of these may interfere or even endanger the building of a harmonious society in the eyes of the state. Not only may online communication dispute the state prerogative of defining practices of meaning making, it also decreases the exclusive power of state control and opens various aspects of social and political issues for negotiation and debate.

3.1 Online policing and harmonization

Structuring and maintaining virtual order is, therefore, on the top of the agenda for constructing and reinforcing language harmony in China. Devising and implementing internet censorship policies have been a vigorous and sometimes aggressive way of policing and controlling online behaviours (Varis, Wang and Du 2011). For instance, in addition to language rules, such as the Language Law of 2000, it is common practice to use automatic screen-masking to block 'disharmonious' language use — ranging from profanity to politically sensitive words or topics — by substituting with asterisks or deleting it altogether. Sometimes an entire webpage or website is removed. The government also contrives a system that inflicts self-monitoring online. CNNIC issues new legislations almost every year regarding the management of internet Protocol addresses in order to accurately track the activities of individual end

users online. The panoptic surveillance measures are conjointly carried out by the Internet police (see Figure 2) who inspect and enforce judicial punishment against 'disharmonious' behaviours. The law enforcement and policing online began in 2003 when the Ministry of Public Security launched the massive Golden Shield censorship project, known as the Great Firewall of China.

Figure 2: Internet police in China (http://www.techradar.com/news/internet/from-china-to-the-uk-net-censorship-worldwide-622428)

In a blog entitled '25 Shocking Facts about Chinese Censorship', Wilkins (2009) lists all of the above and other measurements, including the use of spyware and the ban of transnational social networks such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, in order to censor and control what is happening on the internet in China. It is widely reported in the international media, such as the New York Times, the Guardian, and alike, that the internet censorship in China is the most stringent in the world. In China, more people are employed by the government to monitor and 'guide' online conducts, such as the notorious 50 Cents Party (*wumao dang*) who are allegedly paid at the rate of half a yuan per post to write as so-called grassroots netizens, and to steer public opinions into a 'harmonious' direction. When Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund, decided to charm China by appearing on its most popular social media Sina Weibo during her official visit to China in November 2011, she was instantly cautioned by a netizen named Damo Duhang, 'Please be careful to write! Here is not France. If your word is sensitive, someone would *hexie* you' (Chin 2011).

While the state doctrine of Harmonious Society is used as a mandate to justify the control of communication and the quashing of 'disharmonious' speech online, the word *hexie* has turned into a satirical placeholder for the domineering maintenance of social stability and political order. Netizens started using *hexie* as a euphemism for internet censorship. When they say that a user is 'harmonized', the suggestion is that the person has somehow been brought into compliance by government agency, whether by physical force or by losing access to his/her account. By appropriating this word, netizens voice criticism of claims that state-imposed censorship is the means to build a 'harmonious society'. This attitude is illustrated in a widely cir-

culated picture online, which shows the word 和諧 (*hexie*), in traditional characters, with the radicals 口 ('mouth') all being plastered over (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: *Hexie* with no 'mouth' (http://webfee.blogspot.com/2011/10/blog-post_30.html)

Through this image, netizens argue that harmony is in fact a policing strategy adopted by the authorities to muzzle them, to silence their voices.

3.2 *Hexie*, river crab, and *caonima*

The parody of 'harmony' has, ironically, turned the word itself into a so-called sensitive word, an object of policing. When the word *hexie* begot censored and 'harmonized' online, netizens adopted a new word, 'river crab' (河蟹), to replace the direct use of 'harmony', since these two words are tonologically different homophones: *héxié* for 'harmony', and *héxiè* for 'river crab'. Images of river crabs are shared online to express discontent with the state censorship and suppression of free speech (see Figure 4). Soon, 'river crab' became a 'meme' (an internet buzzword) that symbolizes, euphemistically, the ideological battle between 'harmonization' and 'counter-harmonization' in China's cyberspace.

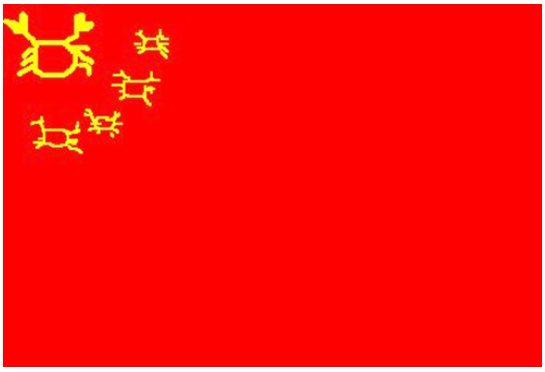

Figure 4: River crab on the national flag (https://blogs.commons.georgetown.edu/ln62-netspeak/)

The move from *héxié* 和谐 to *héxiè* 河蟹 indicates an extraordinary effect of policing. Rather than uniformity and loss of voice, the enforcement of language harmony online has stimulated and facilitated new forms of (super)diversity and new opportunities and ways of self-articulation. This is important to our understanding of language policy as ethnographically informed processes of policing. Even though harmony and internet censorship are forcefully implemented as top-down policy, this policy is being negotiated and resisted by the subordinate group and their individual agency, leading to oppositional responses and unexpected outcomes.

To illustrate this point, we turn to another well-known internet phenomenon since 2009: a 'modern myth' (Hopkins 2011) about 'river crab' fighting 'grass mud horse' — another internet meme created by netizens. 'Grass mud horse' comes from *cǎonímǎ* 草泥马, a seemingly innocent nonsense word. However, it is a carefully invented homophone (again with different tones) of another harmonizable expression, *càonǐmā* 肏你妈, which means 'fuck your mother'. Although the Chinese censorship system aims to curb obscene use of language, the pun effect of *caonima* enables netizens to transgress while satirizing the policy with impunity. This eventually makes the word an icon of grassroots aspirations for freedom of speech. Netizens even designed a written form for this three-character-phrase, by combining elements of each of the three characters 草, 泥 and 马 (see Figure 5). As a netizen named Kenneth Tan explains, 'The 艹 radical refers to "grass" (草), 尼 resembles 泥 and both are homophones, while 马 is the character for "horse". The new character even has a recommended pronunciation *jiàyú*.'

Figure 5: 'Grass mud horse': a new Chinese character
(http:// shanghaiist.com/2009/03/23/character_of_the_day.php)

Initially, *caonima* became popularized for being a clever euphemism of a swearing word that can escape the touch of harmonization/censorship. But, over time, it took on a whole new life beyond this function. A mythical animal depicted as a furry, amiable-looking alpaca was created to give a physical embodiment to the 'grass mud horse', a previously non-existent creature, and it started roaming on the internet. Furthermore, a story was invented and circulated, telling that the magical beast lives in the 'Ma-le Gobi' desert (*mǎlègēbì* 马勒戈壁) and feeds on 'fertile grass' (*wòcǎo*

沃草). Although the environment in Ma-le Gobi is extremely harsh, the grass mud horse lives a happy life there. But one day, the river crab (symbolizing harmonization/censorship) moves into Ma-le Gobi. The grass mud horse and the river crab have a fierce fight and, finally, the grass mud horse wins the battle and goes on living in the fantasy land of Ma-le Gobi thereafter (see Figure 6).

The story (with several slightly varied versions) is a dramatic elaboration of resistance against internet policing by Chinese netizens. One might argue that the protagonist, the grass mud horse, represents the repressed, and the river crab represents the repressor. The use of stories becomes here the 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990) of public political discourse, by developing euphemistic lexicons, images, and narratives through which language use and meaning making are coded in such a way that they are recognized and shared by subordinate groups, but lie beyond or beneath the patrol and surveillance of the authority. These can be understood in terms of 'metro-practices' (Arnaut 2012), acts of communication or identity that travel underground, below the radar of panoptical governmentality. Both 'Ma-le Gobi' and 'fertile grass' are such examples: the former is the homophone of the Chinese vulgar expression *mālegèbī* 妈了个屄 ('your mother's vagina'), and the latter is that of *wǒcào* 我肏 ('I fuck'). In using extreme profanity, subversive puns, as well as the metaphorical plot of the grass mud horse defeating the river crab, netizens are able to utter deep resentment and symbolic defiance of China's internet censorship and figuratively enact the struggles through a fantasy drama of war. The triumph was celebrated across the internet and spawned reproductions in more vivid forms of language online.

Figure 6: 'Grass mud horse' swallowing 'river crab'
(http://kahnlei.blog.sohu.com/147096077.html)

One such example is an online video called 'the song of *caonima*', which went viral after its release in 2009. The song (again with a few versions) features a digital voice

of a children's chorus singing about the life of the grass mud horse in the theme tune of the famous cartoon series The Smurfs, as if to highlight the cuddly creature's decency, innocence, and vitality. In one of the versions published on YouTube (*http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkx1aenjk08*), the song lyrics are subtitled in English as follows:

> There is a herd of Grass Mud Horses (fuck your mom)
> Who live in the MaLe Desert (your mother's cunt)
> They are lively and intelligent
> They are fun-loving and nimble
> They live freely in the MaLe desert (your mother's cunt)
> They are courageous, tenacious, and overcome the difficult environment
> Oh, lying down Grass Mud Horse (Oh, fuck your mother!!!)
> Oh, running wild Grass Mud Horse (Oh, fuck your mother, hard!!!!)
> They defeated the River Crabs (censorship) in order to protect their grassland (free speech)
> River Crabs (censorship) disappeared from the MaLe Gobi Desert forever!!!

The infectiously funny yet perplexingly distorted digital productions, such as this, suggest powerful yet humorous attacks against the harmonization force. The central narrative about *caonima* as feisty survivors and warriors who fight bravely against invaders to protect their scarce resources is, in fact, a hidden political dissent and activism through language violence against harmony-as-hegemony.

This kind of struggles extends even beyond the internet, as the image of *caonima* goes offline, enters the corporeal world, and is turned into consumable goods and identity statements in popular culture (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: *Caonima* T-shirt and toys (http://www.gxyin.com/ShowNews.aspx?id=569)

Not only has *caonima* been transformed into a new cultural product of online spoofs (Meng 2011) and symbolic interactions (S. Wang 2012) for mass consumption, it goes on to expand deeper into Chinese society and becomes an exploitable material with multiple meanings that inspires and provokes a more explicitly 'disharmonious' democratic movement, notably by public intellectuals. For instance, the Chinese artist and dissident Ai Weiwei makes himself a leading actor of this movement by posting photo images of himself, posing naked with only a small furry *caonima* doll blocking or 'harmonizing' his genitals. This is highly controversial not least because of the public display of nudity (which has led to criminal accusations of 'pornography' against Ai Weiwei): the composition of these images comes with a highly offensive caption, which rests on the pun between 'grass mud horse covering the middle' (*cǎonímǎ dǎngzhōngyāng* 草泥马挡中央) and 'fuck your mother the Central Party' (*càonǐmā dǎngzhōngyāng* 肏你妈党中央). This visual and semiotic reframing of *caonima* further broadens the sociolinguistic repertoire of the word and makes it a transparent symbol of ridicule and contempt over the control of internet communication imposed from the above — as depicted in a cartoon impression of Ai Weiwei's act of art by the Chicago artist Tom Tian (see Figure 8). By leaping over the heads of the police, a naked Ai Weiwei, with one hand shielding himself with the grass mud horse and the other raised in a fist high in the air, shows ultimate condemnation, rebellion, and subversion against the hegemony of harmony exercised by the authority.

Figure 8: Ai Weiwei with caonima
(http://www.tomtian.com/#s=2andmi=2andpt=1andpi= 10000andp=4anda=0andat=0)

4 Discussion

From *hexie* to *caonima*, what we have is a complex story about harmony and harmonization, internet censorship, hegemony and suppression, resistance and struggle, semiotic innovation and digital creativity from the Chinese cyberspace (cf. Nie 2009). In the name of traditionalism and nationalism represented (selectively) by the Confucian ideal of harmony, the state is keenly restructuring order and rebalancing social disparity while maintaining an authoritarian system. This ambition of harmony inevitably leads to the 'harmonization', namely, coercion and even denial, of diversity and individual voice, which are enhanced by the internet as a new social arena and new package of resources for constructing alternative identities. The Chinese internet censorship is a new and overt form of policing in response to this phenomenon of globalization. Nevertheless, it is challenged from below.

The above discussions illustrate how innovative manipulations of linguistic, semiotic, and literacy resources via computer-mediated communication creates a new genre of protest and contention through which the process of state policing is sabotaged and challenged. The invention of 'river crab' and 'grass mud horse', together with their associated lexicons, images, puns, and stories, relies on the sophisticated interplay of visual, verbal, and symbolic texts capable of expressing multiple meanings through the same form. This transformation of language function is made possible by the infrastructure of the internet and is propagated and transmitted from online to offline, making these words a socially recognizable and 'enregistered' (Agha 2005) set of codes that offer semiotic, aesthetic, symbolic, and political capitals, thus, allowing Chinese netizens to develop their own voices in the presence of tough policy.

Subversive internet memes like the ones examined here are an important and distinctive part of micro-politics that 'takes advantage of unique possibilities of the Chinese language, as well as the technological possibilities of the internet' (Hopkins 2011). Although memes tend to be contingent, unstable, and temporary — also depending on the extent of policing — their instant usability and trendiness can appeal to mass audiences and can therefore potentially generate mass campaigns against censorship (or other forms of) policing through fast, informal, micro language transgression. The word *hexie* offers a good example of how 'harmony' is turned on its own head and changed from a symbol of policing and homogenization to that of contention and counter-homogenization, totally opposite to what it was intended to mean by the authorities. It spawns a string of new memes, all of which are developed into codes with multiple functions that can be used and appropriated in various settings and environments as anti-policing instruments.

Thus, ironically, in the process of harmonization, 'harmony' has caused a wave of 'disharmonious' behaviour and noise. Such politics of (dis)harmony on the internet can be taken as an indication of super-diversification of voices. Nevertheless, what seems a semiotic carnival drawing wide participation in a range of formats can only

momentarily escape the control and inhibition of the state power. According to Global Voices (a multilingual community of bloggers who report about citizen media stories from around the world), as a consequence of its popularity, the online appearance of *hexie* and *caonima* is officially suspended, and a notification to the Chinese forum managers about the policy banishing of these words is repeatedly tweeted (see Figure 9).

Policing seems omnipresent, but so do phenomena of *hexie* and *caonima*. The banality of power (Mbembe 1992) in the name of harmony already presupposes the existence of disharmony. The question to ask, then, is 'not whether the internet will democratize China, but rather in what ways the internet is democratizing (or will democratize) communication in China' (Tai 2006: 184).

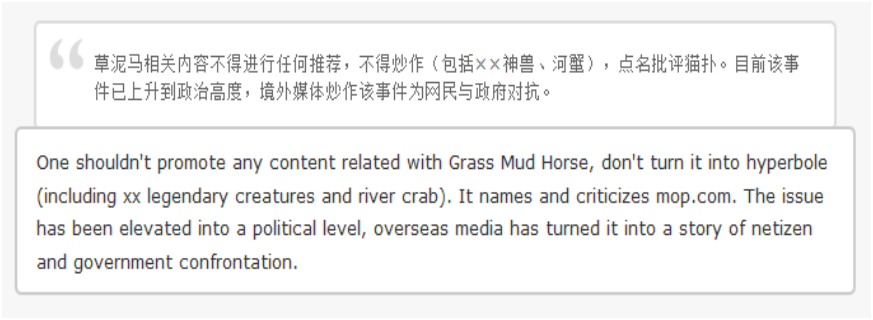

Figure 9: 'One shouldn't promote any content related with grass mud horse' (http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/03/18/china-goodbye-grass-mud-horse/)

5 Conclusions

This paper has reviewed the genesis of 'harmony', a state-political term in China from its early philosophical sources to its contemporary deployment as a tool for social ordering. Harmony, as we have seen, was never an unambiguous concept and has always been contested, remodelled, and challenged, by means of shifts in the intertextual links of the concept. In this sense, harmony joins political core terms such as 'freedom', 'democracy', 'development' and so forth: semantic floaters that, when used skilfully, can stand for entirely different realities. As Bolinger (1971) argued long time ago, the 'pure' or 'original' semantics of a term can never stand for the total array of its actual forms of usage. Word meanings *per se* are poor indicators of the actual life of words in human social and cultural practice.

We are now in a position to formulate two sets of concluding reflections. First, we will extract some general points from our earlier analysis and look at what this tells us about harmony as larger patterns of political and ideological struggles. Secondly,

some general observations can be made regarding the nature of language policy and language policy research.

We have seen that the intensive use of the term 'harmony' in contemporary China is guided by a desire, or demand, for social order. This demand appears to be spurred by the accelerating social differentiation in the PRC in the wake of its rise to global economic prominence. With the emergence of a sizeable professional middle class and a smaller (nevertheless important) class of super-rich people (e.g. Tomba 2009), China is rapidly becoming a class-stratified society characterized by inequalities between rich and poor. This is accompanied by the availability of new information and ideas and new opportunities and resources for identity making provided by the internet.

It is in the context of such escalating social and political divide that 'harmony' must be seen and understood: it is a slogan that responds to the rapid fragmentation and diversification in society by putting some 'spin' on it: in spite of such growing diversities, the Chinese must have a common focus and invest themselves into a project of social cohesion and 'harmony'. This concern with 'harmony' is, thus, an attempt towards re-emphasizing the modernist *monocentric* ideal inscribed in the state structure of China. Harmony should produce, legitimatize and enforce centripetal forces in society and politics, and prevent society from spinning out of control.

This, as we have seen, does not always work according to plans. The monocentric orientation of 'harmony' clashes with the increasing polycentricity in Chinese society, with escalating social, cultural, and political fragmentation — an increasing divergence of values, opinions, and other objects of 'ideology'. The internet is a carrier for such accelerating forms of polycentricity, and we have shown some of the many ways in which Chinese netizens address, in practice, the state's and their own understandings of harmony. The internet, obviously, is a platform not just for centripetal forces in society but also (and perhaps more so) for centrifugal forces, forces that take subjects out of the monocentric orbit of the state. This tension between a centripetal and monocentric social politics, and a centrifugal and polycentric potential afforded through the internet, is well understood by the Chinese authorities, and could be at the core of the state's attempts to monitor and constrain internet use. Similar reactions against the 'chaotic' dimensions of the internet by the state can be observed elsewhere too; think of the knee-jerk reactions by several Western states when WikiLeaks started publishing previously confidential documents.

The future of 'harmony' as a useful concept in Chinese politics will depend on the way in which it can be deployed as a 'niched', non-totalizing concept targeted at the policing and regulation of certain aspects of social life. If it is applied to the totality of social life, it will backfire, because it is an inadequate descriptor of social processes and, consequently, can only be used against specific social processes, as a means to repress and eliminate certain forms of social processes. That is, it can only be used successfully as a potentially repressive policing instrument. It will then share the fate of many other concepts deployed by central authorities in attempts to 'control' and

'reduce' escalating social diversity. 'Integration', 'social stability', 'social cohesion', and other widely used terms will almost inevitably become (or have already become) targets of contestation and conflict, since they are irrelevant as descriptors of the social realities. A monocentric understanding of legitimate identities is likely to lead to coercive and excluding practices in the age of globalization and superdiversity.

So how do we understand language policy in view of the evidence presented here? It is clear that language policy, any language policy, is not a singular object, the features of which can simply be 'read off' core documents and semantic analysis of the core terms in the language-political vocabulary. It is best to see it as a highly complex and non-linear set of practices that are lodged in specific sociolinguistic contexts. The forces that create language-political effects are not unified either, perhaps not even readily identifiable or entirely unpredictable. A more ethnographically-based analysis would bring out the specific factors influencing the direction of these processes, and show us why sometimes coercion will prevail, and why sometimes resistance and transformation occur.

It is also unwise to see language-political statements and key terms as descriptors of sociolinguistic realities. This 'fallacy of internalism' (Thompson 1990) assumes that political realities are contained in political texts, an assumption that has inspired many scholars in language policy. Texts and terms, however, do not predict their own uptake and implementation. In fact, uptake and implementation are fields of research in their own right and require entirely different approaches than the critical textual analysis of language policies. They demand ethnographic inspection; and when such ethnographic inspection is performed, researchers will often encounter unexpected outcomes (cf. McCarty 2011). We can then see formal language policies — texts and their concepts — as flexible and unstable instruments; they may be in design for dogmatic deployment but in reality receive defiant interpretations and adverse consequences, as illustrated in this paper. We can also see formal language policies as just one instrument for shaping the sociolinguistic lives of people; it rarely occurs as the only instrument. Societies and their sociolinguistic environments are polycentric and become increasingly so. Language policies such as that of harmony will therefore have to share their space of manoeuvring with other sets of prescriptions and normative expectations.

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CHAPTER 6

Diaosi as infrapolitics: Scatological tropes, identity-making and cultural intimacy on China's internet

1 Introduction[1]

China's internet space is characterized by a paradoxical combination of draconian government control and vibrant online activism (Yang 2006). On the one hand, through formal regulation, surveillance technology, economic incentive and punitive action, the authorities try to prevent and crush any online activities that are deemed to threaten social and political stability (Tsui 2003). On the other hand, high-profile cases of online activism erupt frequently and are still on the rise, challenging government policies, practices, corruption and abuses of power (Tang and Sampson, 2012; Yang 2009). As such, China presents an interesting and unique case for studying the politics on/of the internet, and related research has been burgeoning.

Much of this body of research so far tends to discuss the explicitly political aspects of internet phenomena in terms of, for instance, control, resistance and activism; various scholars (Leibold 2011; Meng 2011; Wu 2013) recently point out that this tendency overshadows our understanding of other domains of online activities in China, leaving them relatively under-researched. After all, while open socio-political contentions make the Chinese cyberspace energetic and sensational, explicitly confrontational discourses or contents constitute only a proportionately tiny part of China's cyberculture. Echoing Hindman (2009) whose study systematically maps the US online space and concludes that web traffic to political websites is almost negligible, Leibold (2011) points out that similarly, in China, it is also entertainment materials that really make up the mainstream of online activities. Furthermore, because of the powerful cyber censorship regime that the Chinese state operates, people's interests in sensitive political and social issues are discouraged and suppressed, and their attention is often diverted towards online entertainment (Li 2010; MacKinnon 2008; Wang and Hong 2010).

In this article, we examine a recently emerged linguistic/discursive phenomenon on China's internet – that of *diaosi* – taking the position that online practices in China (also elsewhere but especially in authoritarian societies) should not be seen in one-dimensional terms of either politics in the orthodoxical sense or culture as pure en-

[1] This chapter was first published as P. Yang, L. Tang and X. Wang (2014). Diaosi as infrapolitics: scatological tropes, identity-making and cultural intimacy on China's Internet. *Media, Culture and Society* 37(2): 1-18. DOI: 10.1177/0163443714557980

tertainment and consumption. As the case of *diaosi* will show, there is a vast space of 'infrapolitics', that is, an 'unobtrusive realm of political struggle' (Scott 1990: 183), that is opened up by the internet as an emerging public sphere in which politics not only can take the shape of open activism, but also (and perhaps more often) is intricately couched in mass cultural productions and played out on different levels in ways that may not easily be recognized as being political. We wish to highlight through the phenomenon of *diaosi* that, while online discussions of political issues are discouraged in Chinese cyberspace, they are often incarnated either intentionally or unintentionally in cultural forms and spread widely in the process of playing and fun-poking. Below, we will first introduce the notion of 'infrapolitics' before taking a close look at the phenomenon of *diaosi* in China.

1.1 Culture as infrapolitics

While modern politics in liberal democracies is characterized by heated (and presumably rational) debates and strident public protests and demonstrations, James Scott (1990) points out that there has been a long history of less obtrusive political resistance and struggle. Throughout history and in cases where democracy does not exist, subordinate groups often have to hide their defiance in the presence of the dominant, and they are likely to play their role in compliance with the expectations of those who dominate. This is not to say that there is no political resistance or struggle, but to suggest that resistance can remain below the radar of the dominant, kept at the backstage or in disguised forms. To conceptualize such covert political activities, Scott (1990) uses the term 'infrapolitics', which is understood as particular sets of tactics of resistance adopted by the subordinate group that (a) use disguised forms of language, such as rumours, jokes, linguistic tricks, folktales, ritual gestures and so on, as a critique of power or the powerful; (b) do so 'behind anonymity or behind innocuous understanding of their conduct' (1990: xiii); and thus (c) are 'low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name' (1990: 19). As such, infrapolitics is 'the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused' (1990: 184).

The idea that popular culture, such as trickster folktales and world-upside-down prints, can be interpreted as covert political struggle is more pertinent in the context of this article. Popular culture as infrapolitics has also been shown to be central to the cultural approach to mediated citizenship in the public sphere in Western democracies (Hermes 2006; Jones 2006). Jones (2006) challenges the assumption that politics through the media is primarily associated with news and information acquisition. He points out that encounters with mediated politics by ordinary citizens 'are often related to pedestrian pursuits of pleasure, distraction, curiosity, community, sociability, and even happenstance' (2006: 366). Communication, in his view, is not necessarily for the purpose of information acquisition, but to facilitate social integration, that is, to have a sense of identity, community, sociability and fraternity. As

entertainment and cultural programs can often tap into affective feelings and beliefs more effectively than formalized discourse, they have arguably more political resonance with ordinary people than overt, rationalized political appeals. Scott, Street and Inthorn (2011), for instance, examined how young people in the United Kingdom use different forms of popular culture, such as television, video games and pop music, to express and make sense of their relationship to politics. They found that

> Popular culture, in its various forms, was found to offer young people particularly salient points of identification with the national and international arena in a way that news media do not, and young people appear to make connections between the private and the political far more easily in their talk about popular culture. (Scott, Street and Inthorn 2011: 513)

While this perspective does not imply that all culture is disguised political resistance and struggle, it does point to the fact that political engagement is potentially embedded in everyday cultural discourses and practices.

The cultural approach to mediated politics emerges from the contemporary media landscape in which entertainment and politics are converging and the boundaries between the two are increasingly blurred. The rise of satirical TV programs provides perhaps the most vivid example (Gray, Jones and Thompson 2009). In a study of a US TV satire, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, Baym (2005) argues that news satire represents a version of news that entertains, and entertainment in the context of satire means to give audiences pleasure while making them think about sociopolitical issues. This argument is supported by a number of other studies of TV satire (e.g. Day 2009; Gray, Jones and Thompson 2009; Von Königslöwa and Keel 2012; Morreal 2009). As TV satire becomes popular and attracts large numbers of audiences across the globe, it is argued to have 'become an increasingly central mechanism for public engagement with the state, and the formal realm of legislative and electoral politics' in democratic countries (Baym and Jones 2012: 10).

It has been widely observed that the Chinese cyberspace is a hilarious and delightful place full of jokes, parodies and puns (Tang and Bhattacharya 2011; Tang and Yang 2011; Yang 2009). 'Participation culture' and 'collective intelligence' (Jenkins 2006) enabled by the internet in the socio-political environment of China, argues Tang (2013b), foster an online 'satire culture' in China. Internet satire, or '*e-gao*' as is known in China, has lately attracted a considerable amount of research attention (e.g. Li 2010; Meng 2011; Tang 2013b; Tang and Bhattacharya 2011; Tang and Yang 2011). *E-gao* shares some similarities with the *diaosi* phenomenon that we are going to examine in this article in that both are forms of mockery, but they also differ: while the former tends to mock the powerful and/or the authorities and therefore borders activism, the latter – our subject matter in this article – is closer to entertainment and is a practice of self-mockery which can be understood to be an act of spontaneous collective identity-making, albeit inevitably also politically infused.

As such, the *diaosi* phenomenon is worth examination for two reasons: first, it offers a concrete case study of infrapolitics in the cyber context, and second, as we will explain below, it allows us to take a more nuanced approach to online cultural politics than *e-gao* or satire does. As our foregoing review of literature has acknowledged, many recent researchers have rightly called for broadening the interpretive scope of the 'political' into the context of media 'prosumption' (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). Responding to this call, we pay due attention to the politicality of the cultures of scatological flaming/self-flaming by examining the embeddedness of these cultures in China's specific socio-political conditions and events. On the other hand, as the cultural approach to studying media advocates, it is equally important to understand communication *ritually* – in addition to *instrumentally* – as a form of social integration aimed at achieving communion, commonality and fraternity (Holmes 2005; Jones 2006). Thus, in this article, we also look at the intersection of scatological flaming/self-flaming, as in the case of *diaosi*, with identity-making through the conceptual lens of *cultural intimacy*.

2 The rise of the *diaosi* phenomenon in China

In early November 2012, when the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was in session in Beijing – which marked China's transition into the current leadership of Xi and Li – another in-its-own-way momentous event of a linguistic/discursive nature took place: a bizarre two-character Chinese expression '*diaosi*' (屌丝 in Chinese) (Figure 1) appeared in a commentary in the Chinese state's flagship mouth-piece, the broadsheet *People's Daily*. This appearance drew wide attention and indeed universal surprise from society,[2] not least because the scatological neologism seemed one unlikely to have found its way into the highly formal and propaganda-saturated official discursive space of the *People's Daily* newspaper.

With *diao* (屌) meaning penis and *si* (丝) meaning string, hair or line, *diaosi* might come across to an uninformed Chinese reader as an unfamiliar word that nevertheless conjures up unpleasant or embarrassing images associated with the male genitalia, such as pubic hair. Inquiry into the provenance of this term, however, reveals that it has nothing to do with pubic hair as such.

[2] See, for example, http://www.ministryoftofu.com/2013/06/the-diaosi-social-class-presage-of-impending-social-changes-in-china/ and http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2012-11-17/07037806732.shtml

Figure 1: 'Diaosi' appears in *People's Daily*

The word *diaosi* first appeared in late 2011 on the online fan club of a Chinese soccer player named Li Yi, who was generally regarded as mediocre except for one or two not nearly redeeming qualities. Mediocre Li might have been, but he was narcissistic enough to have once famously compared himself to the celebrated French soccer player Thierry Henry, known as King Henry in China. This drew him widespread mockery from Chinese fans and netizens, who accordingly dubbed him King Li Yi, or *Li Yi Da Di* in Chinese, literally Li Yi the Great (*da*) Emperor (*di*). Because the Chinese word for '(rice) noodle strings' is *fensi* (粉丝), young Chinese people, especially netizens, have for some years used *fensi* as a playful transliteration for 'fans' because of the two terms' similarity in pronunciation. Accordingly, the *fensi* ('fans') of *Li Yi Da Di* in the online fan club jocularly referred to themselves as *Di-si*, or *D-si* (D 丝) for short. Being followers of a soccer player of disputed reputation, these *D-si* became the targets of further flaming from other netizens who suggested that the letter D really meant *diao* or 'dick', and hence *D-si* were really *diaosi*. Thus, with several twists and turns that are not atypical to wordplays in a Chinese sociolinguistic context, the bizarre expression was born. But until this point, it would be fair to say that *diaosi* was a relatively unremarkable instance of flaming that happens daily in China's vast cyberspace, and the term remained a highly context-dependent label applicable only to a niche audience. It was the attitude with which the *D-si* themselves took to this derogatory term that marked the real turning point of the social meaning and subsequent life of *diaosi*.

Apparently, instead of feeling embarrassed about this term of mockery, the Li Yi fans actually embraced it and began to wear it as a badge of honour, proudly calling themselves *diaosi* all the time, hence popularizing the term. This attitude of accepting a mockery, turning it into self-mockery and taking pleasure and pride in embodying the mocked character may be regarded as the spiritual essence of the *diaosi* phenomenon. Before too long, more and more people on China's internet, most of

whom had nothing to do with soccer fandom, started to call themselves *diaosi* as well. *Diaosi* hence came into full blossom in 2012 on China's internet, spreading virally until it became virtually ubiquitous; it was also widely regarded as one of the 'buzzwords of the year' (Wang 2012).

But what exactly does *diaosi* mean, now that it has been detached from its original soccer related context? And why has *diaosi* achieved such an astonishing level of popularity? The answers to these two questions may be the same: *diaosi* has become something of an identity label and perhaps even a galvanizing imaginary for a class of self-perceived urban underdog consisting of relatively young people in China. Cyber commentators and journalists seem to agree that *diaosi* broadly stands for the 'under-privileged loser' (Gao 2013). According to Cohen's (2013) succinct definition, *diaosi*

> calls to mind a young graduate working a dead-end job, with little prospect of saving enough to buy a house and a car – basic trappings of middle-class life that are widely seen as essential prerequisites to finding a girlfriend and marriage.

The following excerpt from a widely read commentary article carried by *ifeng.com* – a respected news portal and forum based in Hong Kong – further offers some vivid descriptions as to what kind of people are considered *diaosi*:

> They have no money, no background, no future; they all love playing DotA, they love Di fans club […]; in front of 'tall-rich-handsome' (gao-fu-shuai), all they can do is to kneel down; gathering all their courage to strike a conversation with a 'goddess' (nüshen), what they get in return is a mere 'hehe'; […] they are diaosi. […] Diaosi usually refers to young men; they are from humble backgrounds, and they call their work 'moving bricks' (banzhuan) … They share a low (socioeconomic) status, a boring life, a hopeless future, and an empty emotional life; they are not accepted by the society.[3]

Here, it is worth pointing out that although there seems a consensus that *diaosi* refers to some sense of an underdog or underprivileged identity, the exact definition of the term cannot be easily pinned down, nor described in an exhaustive or precise manner. A certain degree of deliberate vagueness and flexibility in definition no doubt helped *diaosi* achieve the kind of popularity it had. For some, *diaosi* is more or less synonymous with another expression that has been popular in Chinese cyberspace of late: *ai-cuo-qiong*, meaning 'short-ugly-poor', which is the antonym to the triple-adjective *gao-fu-shuai*, or 'tall-rich-handsome', in the *ifeng.com* excerpt. The cartoon in Figure 2 which circulates widely on China's internet is a caricature of *diaosi* in this sense: the short phrases from top-left to bottom-right, respectively, mean: '(height) 1.68 m', 'no girlfriend', 'scores 2 points for looks', 'monthly salary

[3] See http://news.ifeng.com/opinion/special/diaosi/

2,000 yuan', 'cheap product from *taobao.com* [China's equivalent of eBay – author]' and 'fake gadget'. 'Goddess', as also found in the above-quoted *ifeng.com* excerpt, refers to those 'perfect' girls (also known as the *bai-fu-mei* or 'fair(skinned)-rich-beautiful') whose natural partners are the *gao-fu-shuai*; they, therefore, remain the unreachable idols for *diaosi*.

Figure 2: *Diaosi* caricature

In other contexts, *diaosi* seems to also carry certain occupational connotations, in the sense that low-level computer programmers who spend long hours in front of the monitor and on the internet, and who kill time mainly by surfing the internet and playing computer games because they cannot afford otherwise, are particularly inclined to consider themselves *diaosi* and to be considered as *diaosi*. Their work is often arduous, boring, repetitive and, above all, poorly paid; these *diaosi* thus compare their work to 'moving bricks' (*banzhuan*) such as workers on construction sites would do. Suffice it to say, *diaosi* basically means someone of middle- or lower-middle-class positions, working in a poorly paid and unsatisfying job, possessing few natural advantages such as physical attractiveness or wealthy family backgrounds, and who as a result fits into the common imagination of a pitiable and contemptible loser in contemporary Chinese society.

Since 2012, the word *diaosi* has been virtually everywhere on China's internet. This is partially reflected in the fact that a fair number of English blogposts and reports about the *diaosi* phenomenon have even been written, by both Chinese and foreign observers (e.g. Cohen 2013; Marquis and Yang 2013; Zhang and Barreda 2013). (So far, we are not aware, however, of any academic publication that specifically addresses '*diaosi*' and certainly hope this article will plug this gap.) Jokes, satires, mockeries and parodies, either in textual, visual or multimedia forms, proliferated in the cyberspace. The appearance, behaviour and mentality of the *diaosi* are of-

ten caricatured and contrasted with equally exaggerated performances of *diaosi*'s antonym identities, the *gao-fu-shuai* or *bai-fu-mei*, creating alternately humorous and satirical effects. Soon, anyone and everyone on the internet seemed to enjoy calling others as well as themselves *diaosi*, and these people by far exceeded the scope of 'underprivileged losers' that the term supposedly refers to (Zhang and Barreda 2013). According to one source (Gao 2013), 529 million Chinese are said to identify with the term, which is virtually the size of China's entire netizenry. Even professionals working in banking/finance, PhD students at top universities and overseas-educated returnees are said to consider themselves *diaosi* (Cohen 2013). The pervasiveness of this wave of '*diaosi* mentality' ('屌丝心态') was arguably the reason why the *People's Daily* felt obliged to acknowledge it in one social commentary in November 2012, presumably to gesture the official publication's relevance to new social trends.

The extraordinary level of popularity with Chinese netizens has made *diaosi* an ideal marketing vehicle for various cultural commodities. Increasingly, *diaosi* becomes a magical shibboleth the mere invocation of which incites interest and popularity, whether or not its use still pertains to its original semantics. In other words, it became, to some extent, a signifier without the signified. In early 2012, the German TV sketch comedy series *Knallerfrauen* found its way into Chinese cyberspace and was subtitled and watched widely. Featuring abundant slapstick humour enacted by an award-winning comedian, Martina Hill, who does not shy away from the most embarrassing and absurd performances, the show was a huge hit with the Chinese public. Significantly, instead of a translation more faithful to the original title of the show, it was known in China simply as '*Diaosi* Lady' (屌丝女士). While embarrassment and laughability are shared between the *diaosi* imagination and the comedic heroine of the show, the connections seem to end there.

This was also true of a subsequent Chinese sketch comedy show that was directly inspired by *Knallerfrauen* – some would say a copycat of it – the *Diors Man* show, where apparently the French fashion brand Dior is appropriated into its English title, while the Chinese title remained '*Diaosi Man*' (屌丝男士). Produced by *soho.com* as an online TV sketch comedy with a highly similar format to that of *Knallerfrauen*, the show's first series was released in October 2012, ending after seven weekly episodes, each lasting about 16 minutes. The first episode was reportedly played some 4.4 million times within just 24 hours of its release online. After the phenomenal success of the *Diors Man* first season, which ended in November 2012, in June-July 2013, a second season was released, in a similar format. By August 2013, the accumulated counts of play times registered on the show's official hosting website *www.soho.com* stood at over 300 million for *Diors Man* Season One and over 200 million for Season Two. These figures do not even include the viewership counts on other online channels such as YouTube and so on. If we were to borrow a Chinese idiomatic expression for describing the popularity of someone or something, we might justifiably say that *diaosi*'s 'shine' has 'lit up half the sky' (*hongtou banbiantian*), and all this is despite

the fact that in the *Diors Man* show there was only the very occasional humour associated with the original meanings of *diaosi*.

One final example shall suffice to conclude our discussion of the incredible popularity and influence of the *diaosi* cultural phenomenon. In April 2013, a digital poster with the words *diaosi*, both Chinese characters and pinyin, strikingly appeared on a digital billboard in New York's Times Square (Figure 3). It was an advertisement for an online computer game called *The Mythical Realm*, made by Giant Interactive Inc., a Chinese software company based in Shanghai. Not only did the company leverage on *diaosi*'s popularity to appeal to China's vast netizenry, even the company's then CEO, a legendary Chinese entrepreneur-billionaire Shi Yuzhu called himself a *diaosi*. However, after realizing that the Chinese character *diao* means 'dick', embarrassed American authorities ordered the digital poster to be taken down for violating regulations governing the use of vulgarity in advertisement.[4]

Figure 3: *Diaosi* in Times Square, New York

3 Analyses: Subversion, solidarity and sociality through scatology

The remarkable story of *diaosi* is yet another case of the immensely rich, vibrant and oftentimes bizarre and carnivalesque cybercultures in China, which many researchers have thus far interpreted as deeply pregnant with socio-political meaning and significance (Meng 2011; Tang 2013a, 2013b; Tang and Bhattacharya 2011; Tang and Yang 2011; Wang, Juffermans and Du 2012). The *diaosi* phenomenon, we contend, shares similarities and common grounds with other cyber cultural events both in China as well as outside it; at the same time, it also possesses certain unique qualities of its own, which in turn reveal unique aspects of the sociocultural contexts in which it was spawned. In what follows, we offer an analysis of *diaosi* along three distinct yet interrelated dimensions.

[4] http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20130421000007andcid=1103

3.1 Reacting against hypernormalization

The first impression one may have about *diaosi* is that it is scatological, and it instantiates a pervasive culture of indulging in scatological linguistic practices – jokes, puns, wordplays and so on – on China's internet. We argue that part of *diaosi*'s immense popularity can be simply attributed to its reference to a most universal vulgarity: the dick. Regarding scatological tropes, Speier (1998: 1390) points out that

> The extreme form of vulgarity and of undignified behaviour is the unrestrained performance of bodily function. Such instances, when they occur, are often funny in an entirely simple and natural way, so that no additional joke is required to produce mirth.

Not dissimilar to what Tang and Yang (2011) have argued regarding another linguistic event that swept through China's cyberspace several years before – the Grass Mud Horse (or *caonima*, which is homophonic to 'fuck your mother' in Chinese) phenomenon – *diaosi* affords people the cathartic pleasure of swearing every time it is pronounced and reproduced textually. It has been previously noted (Meng 2011; Tang and Yang 2011; Wang, Juffermans and Du 2012) that Grass Mud Horse could be primarily interpreted as netizens' clever and covert subversion against the Chinese state's authoritarian language policies and draconian control over online speech, but what this analysis leaves unexamined is the more general but surely more widely shared appetites for verbal obscenities among the Chinese netizens, which we believe partially underpins the popularity of *diaosi*. The notion of *hypernormalization* is helpful here.

It is a fact that seldom escapes the observers of public communication in contemporary China (e.g. Latham 2009; Liu 2011; Meng 2011; Steinmüller 2010, 2011, 2013; Tang 2013b; Wang, Juffermans and Du 2012) that there exists a huge gap between the official discourses of the party-state, which are rigid, formalized/stylized, saturated with propaganda and ideological rhetoric, and the popular discourses such as those found in the cyberspace and people's daily conversations, which are decidedly informal, creative but often also 'coarse' and 'vulgar'. Boyer and Yurchak (2010: 181–182), drawing on their research on communication in late-Socialist societies, called 'the highly monopolized and normalized conditions of discourse productions' *hypernormalization*, the effect of which is 'that state-sponsored political discourse was saturated with overcrafted, repetitive and frequently esoteric formulations that distanced the authoritative discourse of socialism from its desired intimate connections with the language and thinking of its citizen subjects.'

Since China remains formally a socialist state, these descriptions stay highly pertinent. Not unlike its former counterparts in Eastern Europe, the CPC party-state today still invests enormous amounts of energy and time into achieving the 'perfect language of political communication' (Boyer and Yurchak 2010: 182): endless slogans are created, disseminated, discussed and studied in order to mobilize party cadres

and ordinary citizens to act in line with official policies; empty-sounding clichés and stilted expressions are packed into state policy documents and leaders' speeches which are then mass-circulated to the general public through state mouthpiece media such as the *People's Daily* newspaper and the daily 30-minute evening news programme (*Xinwen Lianbo*). Although it must be acknowledged that the macro-social and communicative environments of the late-socialist societies in the 1980s vastly differ from that of present-day China, not least thanks to the advent of the internet, hypernormalization is nevertheless still a tangible reality in Chinese social life. Most people are impacted by this discursive hypernormalization, usually through the propaganda work in the contexts of school education and workplace/grassroots political organization; if not so, people at least come into contact with it through the aforementioned mass media channels.

In their account of the *Stiob* culture in the late-socialist Eastern Europe, Boyer and Yurchak (2010) focused on people's one way of reacting to hypernormalization: mimicking it with such earnestness and authenticity that it becomes impossible to know whether ridicule or homage was intended, thus trapping the state with regard to how it could react. *Stiob*-like parodies of the hypernormalized political communication certainly exist in abundance in China; for instance, the 30-minute-long daily evening news program is perennially satirized online and offline (Meng 2011). However, 'irreverence and sub-version can certainly entail imitation and irony, but they can also take the form of out-right rejection and mockery' (Herzfeld 2005: 53). Accordingly, we argue that an even more common and straightforward reaction of the Chinese public is to simply go to the extremes of vulgarity/profanity to counter the alienating and arguably *inhuman* languages of the dominant power. Scatological tropes, in a sense, are the most *human* expressions of all, because they blatantly refer to bodily parts and functions. They are the most straightforward reaction to state hypernormalization.

Many puns and wordplays that have been recently popular on China's internet were precisely such scatological ones with a certain political edge. For example, the term *pimin* (屁民) was originated when a CPC cadre in a drunken brawl called ordinary people around him 'fart', or *pi* in Chinese, implying that they were insignificant compared to himself, a high-ranking party cadre. Just like the English portmanteau 'shitizen', *pimin* captures a widely shared sense of powerlessness and disenfranchisement felt by ordinary Chinese citizens. Not surprisingly, soon it was adopted by many to refer to themselves, in exactly the same logic by which *diaosi* became a badge of self-identification for millions (see next section). Another example is the phrase *dangzhongyang zongshuji*, which when pronounced in the correct intonations and written with the correct Chinese characters (党中央总书记) means 'General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee', that is, the most powerful position in the Chinese political hierarchy. This set phrase appears so often in propaganda materials and official political discourses that it is inevitably satirized through puns. One such pun works through changing the tones of several characters and re-writing them as

'裆中央总竖鸡', which now means a permanently erect penis at the centre of the crotch. There are many more such scatological puns and wordplays on China's internet that we cannot afford to examine here, but our point is that obscene linguistic tricks seem to be one widely deployed tactic with which Chinese netizens react to the official discursive hypernormalization. Such a reaction creates an endless appetite for vulgarities in China's cyberspace, and, we argue, it is first against this background that we should understand *diaosi*'s enormous popularity.

3.2 Identity-making amid social stratification

The second and arguably the most important explanation for the *diaosi* phenomenon is the extent to which it resonated with widely shared sentiments in contemporary Chinese society. As none of the English commentaries/reports on *diaosi* failed to point out, *diaosi* is how a vast number of relatively young urban Chinese citizens currently see themselves: the underprivileged and the losers in a society that is undergoing rapid economic growth but also treacherous social stratification. China's fait accompli embracing of capitalist mass consumerism (and all its associated cultures) together with the highly unequal distribution of wealth makes for a society of conspicuous consumption, money-worship, pride and haughtiness of the 'haves' and envy and discontent in the 'have-nots' (Liu 2011; Yan 2009a). When such a society is 'turbo-charged' with the instant connectivity afforded by the internet, social media and portable communication devices, everybody suddenly becomes conscious of what they have and have not vis-a-vis others. This explains why a huge number of *diaosi*-related humour is based on *diaosi* people's supposed lack of material possessions, in contrast to the *tall-rich-handsomes* and *fair-rich-beautifuls* who seem to 'have it all'.

This widely shared sense of discontent and dispiritedness rooted in having no wealth, no privilege, no security and no hope in a society where these are most prized possessions may be regarded as what James Scott (1990) has called the 'hidden transcript' carried by the simple epithet *diaosi*. *Diaosi* gained such popularity because it is a pithy, funny, dirty word that amounts to the 'public declaration' (Scott 1990) of the social discontent, yet in an indirect and inexplicit manner. Because *diaosi* is an encrypted and indirect form of social critique, in its process of viral spread, it encountered virtually no intervention from the state censorship regime.

Given the spontaneity, the diverse contexts and the massive volume and rapidity of its uptake by the grassroots, *diaosi* constitutes arguably the most significant *identity-making* event in China in recent years. David Buckingham's (2000) argument that 'claims to identity are essentially claims to social power' is useful here for understanding the complexities in *diaosi* identity-making (2000: 72). If *diaosi* is an underdog identity, and therefore presumably suffers from a deficit of social power, then why do people still flock to claim it? It is here important to distinguish between the connotation of powerlessness of the term when applied to a single social agent and

its potentially radical powerfulness when claimed by a large *collectivity* of social agents. Indeed, for the sake of argument, an analogy may be drawn between *diaosi* and the proletariat identity, one that served as the foundation for the Communist revolutionary consciousness and action, and one that has gradually disappeared in China since the country's post-Mao reform from the late 1970s. Both identities declare the claimers of the identities to have nothing and no power, but precisely by doing so, they launch scathing social/political criticisms and stake out their claims for power. While it would be stretching our argument way too far to suggest that *diaosi* is revolutionary or even deeply subversive (see next section), it should be nevertheless clear that it critiques the social conditions in which it first arose. Another analogy that can be drawn is the discourse of '99% vs 1%' that has been prominent in some of the Occupy movements and Social Justice movements in the West of late (Roos 2013). In this regard, the logic underlying *diaosi* as a popular, politically infused identity is not unique.

But the complexity of *diaosi* identity-making manifests in the varying and nuanced ways in which this term has been put to use by people. *Diaosi* first emerged as a derogatory term that was applied to others, but it soon turned into something that many were willing to wear for themselves. In other words, it is an identity label that is simultaneously used for identifying *others*, identifying *with others* and self-identification. As Marquis and Yang's (2013) analysis of *diaosi*-related *Weibo* (China's equivalent of Twitter) posts shows, at any given moment, the term is always used in simultaneously positive, neutral and negative ways, although generally there was a shift from the negative to the positive over time. When someone or some behaviour is labelled *diaosi*, it is never quite easy to disentangle the mockery (contempt/aggressive), the fun-poking (indifferent/benign) and the solidarity-building (conciliatory/convivial) that are typically coexistent in that act of labelling. When millions of Chinese netizens self-identify as *diaosi*, it is equally difficult to disentangle the self-deprecation, the social critique and the pre-emptive self-protection (since one has now called oneself *diaosi* in the first place, it would be redundant for others to point that out) that are often braided together. Such rich nuances in the identity-making practices associated with *diaosi* are not usually found in other popular Chinese identity labels, not even in *diaosi*'s opposite numbers: *gao-fu-shuai* or *bai-fu-mei*.

3.3 Cultural intimacy and the craving for the collective

Having discussed the political and critical aspects of *diaosi* in the two foregoing sections, we want to stress in this final section that the phenomenon should not be over-politicized either. While its popularity is undoubtedly grounded in social issues and conditions, it does not aim for social transformation but stops at merely illuminating social malaise. No revolutionary sentiment is kindled, nor any rigorous analytical penetration of social structure/condition achieved, precisely because it is not supposed to achieve these. It would be unrealistic to expect a term like *diaosi* to

have political teeth, for otherwise instead of becoming popular it would have already been crushed in the censorship machine. In fact, the political edge of *diaosi* is much more hidden than other aforementioned scatological mockeries such as 'grass mud horse' or 'the permanently erect penis at the centre of the crotch', both of which directly target the authorities. It is precisely because of this that *diaosi* can be featured in the *People's Daily*.

Yet, it would be unfair to suggest that *diaosi* achieves nothing either. It serves the millions of Chinese people who adopted and adored it in the realm of the emotional, because it provides them with a device through which they could achieve *virtual* feelings of bonding, communion, and fraternity in a context where they have been structurally deprived of such feelings. As anthropologist Yunxiang Yan (2008, 2009b) has pointed out, the post-Mao reform has triggered a massive process of individualization of the Chinese society, where people have become disembedded from former social categories and relations without being re-embedded into new categories or networks of security. According to Yan, in contrast to the individualization processes in Western welfare societies, the Chinese version of individualization was not undergirded by an adequate social safety net and hence plunged people into an insecure and anxious state of individuality. *Diaosi* not only vividly captures this widely shared sense of insecurity and anxiety, more importantly, it provides a common imaginary basis through which people can experience collectivity – no matter how virtual or contingent – something that has by and large vanished in today's Chinese society.

This craving for the collective leads us to speculate on the possible connection between *diaosi* and the notion of Chinese citizenship, taking a route provided by anthropologist Michael Herzfeld's (2005) seminal idea: *cultural intimacy*. When the giant *diaosi* digital billboard appeared in New York's Times Square in early 2013, arguably it was not just the American authorities who should feel embarrassed, but the Chinese people, too – after all, what does the fact that an essentially scatological vulgar term has become so widely popular with an entire people that it is being used as an effective marketing catchphrase say about that people? Herzfeld (2005) calls those aspects of a cultural identity that could be considered a source of *external* embarrassment but that nevertheless provide *insiders* with an assurance of common solidarity cultural intimacy, and he argues that such cultural intimacy is a crucial force that binds the nation-state community together. This shared, intimate embarrassment, in addition to idealized national 'virtues', co-constitutes the basis for senses of belonging to an 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006).

In 1985, Taiwanese author Bo Yang wrote a book entitled *The Ugly Chinaman* (*Choulou de Zhongguoren*; English version published in 1992) which railed at what he perceived to be the 'fundamental corruptedness' (*liegenxing*) of the Chinese people's characters. The book was a huge success across the Taiwan Strait in Mainland China, and many people genuinely agreed with Bo Yang's scathing assessment of the Chinese as people and culture. Several years later, in 1988, Mainland China's state television station, CCTV, produced a documentary series called *River Elegy* (*He Shang*)

which, in tones very much echoing The Ugly Chinaman, lashed out at the 'backwardness', the 'feudal' and 'slavish' ethics of the Chinese people that the documentary's producers believed was hindering China's modernization at that point.

Both the book and the documentary can be considered extreme cases of cultural intimacy in the Chinese context, and fit well with Herzfeld's (2005: 6) remark that '[e]mbarrassment, rueful self-recognition: these are the key markers of what cultural intimacy is all about.' Crucially, we wish to point out, both these exercises of cultural intimacy were carried out by *insiders* who were considered Chinese; had it been foreigners of non-Chinese ethnicity who dared to levy the same criticisms on the Chinese, the public response would probably not have been agreement and approval but severe censure and protest. This strongly speaks to the significant role of the culturally and socially intimate in constituting people's experiences of nation and their sense of belonging.

Diaosi is certainly intimate. Embarrassment and self-recognition are no doubt integral to it, although in this case, playfulness and joviality seem to take the place of rue-fullness. People who mirthfully identify each other as well as themselves as *diaosi* achieve a sense of intimacy in the impersonal space of the internet, regardless of the likelihood that outsiders might find millions of people calling themselves 'dick string' a situation for embarrassment. In line with Herzfeld's argument that cultural intimacy contributes to national solidarity and belonging, here we wish to tentatively propose that the *diaosi* identity can be regarded as one newest interpretation of the Chinese citizenship/membership, because it captures at least one prominent dimension of so many Chinese people's self-perception as to what it means to be an ordinary Chinese in this day and age. In other words, *diaosi* can arguably be seen as one fluid and dynamic edge along which innovative negotiations and imaginations of the very meaning of being Chinese are taking shape.

In all of this cultural politics of intimacy, the Chinese state occupies an ambiguous and as-yet indeterminate position. To participate in this spontaneous, bottom-up intimacy that *diaosi* invokes may help to secure the *state* by tapping into the bonding forces of the nation; in light of this, the *People's Daily*'s apparently surprising act of using the expression *diaosi*, as we mentioned earlier in the article, can be read as an attempt by the state to show that it endorses and shares with the ordinary Chinese public in this cultural intimacy.

Finally, cultural intimacy may also explain why many people who are in fact wealthy and powerful nevertheless do not mind or are even eager to identify themselves as *diaosi*. The more one is actually removed from what *diaosi* originally describes, that is, under-privileged losers, the less legitimate it would be for him/her to identify *others* as *diaosi*, because doing so would amount to an unambiguous insult; instead, for these relatively privileged 'winners', a profitable option is actually to self-identify as *diaosi* so as to share the cultural intimacy, thereby achieving a social solidarity/bonding that arguably protect their vested interests in a stratifying Chinese society that favours themselves. We believe this is also the reason why, as *diaosi*

spread wider and wider on China's internet, that is, into demographic groups who were not really *diaosi*, the term more and more tended towards self-identification.

4 Conclusion

In this article, we examined why a bizarre vulgarity, the cyber-term *diaosi*, became enormously popular in China. We argued that, on the one hand, it became popular because it invokes as well as pokes fun at socio-political problems and malaise that ordinary Chinese people collectively experience, while, on the other hand, it responded to the cravings for as well as the strategic deployments of cultural intimacy against the backdrop of the individualization of the contemporary Chinese society. As such, we believe, as a phenomenon of cyberculture and public culture, the story of *diaosi* vividly reflects socio-political realities and public moods and longings in China.

Diaosi achieved widespread popularity under China's draconian censorship regime because the socio-political critique it offers is hidden in self-mockery and transformed into other cultural valences. This may be regarded as a case of what Scott (1990) calls the 'infrapolitical', an in-between space that is neither benign online entertainment nor overt political activism, but mediates the two and blends them together. In this space, socio-political issues are incarnated either intentionally or unintentionally in various creative cultural forms and spread in the processes of linguistic play. We believe that the infrapolitical has become a central feature of China's internet today and argue that to adequately examine and understand this feature, a more nuanced approach sensitive to both the political and the cultural is needed, as we have attempted in this article.

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CHAPTER 7

Inauthentic authenticity: Semiotic design and globalization in the margins of China

1 Points of departure[1]

In an insightful ethnographic study of the francophone areas in Canada, Monica Heller (2003) observes that, as a result of the emerging heritage tourism, the previously stigmatized regional variety of French spoken there starts to acquire new economic value and social legitimacy because of its ring of authenticity. She argues that the commodification of language and identity in a globalized new economy repositions Canadian French speakers from a marginalized ethnolinguistic minority to potentially privileged owners of bilingual resources with new economic opportunities. This opens up room for them to negotiate what it means to be authentic locally in terms of language status and cultural affiliation, as this transition redefines the roles of language in relation to local identity claims while reorganizing the normative systems of producing, distributing, and recognizing language resources for identity practices (i.e. 'orders of authenticity', cf. Wang 2012) on the local, the State, and other supra-local scale-levels. The outcome of this is the transformation of authenticity in its old sense, which, paradoxically, involves '(visibly) inauthentic processes of standardization and commodification' (Heller 2003: 475) demanded by new market conditions.

Heller's study offers several points of inspiration for our investigation of authenticity – understood here primarily as identity effects emerging from specific semiotic practices that render the production, uptake, and consumption of these effects socially recognizable and legitimate – in the context of China in this paper.[2] Heller's work reminds us of the margins as an important site of authenticity. Sociolinguistically, what constitutes margins (e.g. ethnolinguistic minorities) and what makes their authenticity compelling and legitimate are characterized by how they have been imagined and represented from the perspective of the centres and the dominant groups (cf. Bauman and Briggs 2003). Such authenticity is socially constructed and construed, norm-governed and systemically controlled, often centring on binaries of superior/inferior, valid/invalid, real/fake, etc. (Smith 2015 offers a case in point); so do the semiotic resources for producing authenticity (language, symbol, image, dis-

[1] This chapter was first published as X. Wang (2015). Inauthentic authenticity: Semiotic design and globalization in the margins of China. *Semiotica* 203: 227–248.

[2] See Wang (2013) for a fuller discussion.

course, etc.) – in terms of distribution, ownership, and value judgment. Thus, for the margins, authenticity is a matter of high social and symbolic stakes, and its achievement necessarily revolves around the normative expectations of the centres and the structural inequality in power and normativity between the margins and the centres.

Yet, as Heller's study also shows, processes of globalization, in specific ways, begin to change and reorder the (infra)structure of the centre-periphery distinction and, as such, the discursive regime upon which the production and recognition of authenticity are largely based (Coupland 2003a; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013). Globalization creates unprecedented translocal mobilities and unexpected identity potentials (e.g. Giddens 1990; Appadurai 1996) – nevertheless, highly *niched* ones – in which very specific semiotic opportunities appear, and specialized semiotic resources, sometimes new or invented ones, are required in order to accomplish authenticity (Blommaert 2003). For the margins, these sociolinguistic niches, as seen in the francophone heritage tourism in Canada, offer spaces in which the modernist order of authenticity is contested and reconfigured by postmodern realities.

Further, Heller's study points us to the emerging paradigm of a 'sociolinguistics of globalization' (cf. Blommaert 2003, 2010; also Coupland 2003b; Blommaert and Rampton 2011), of which the central argument is that communicational events in a globalizing environment tend to develop 'at different scales, on which different orders of indexicality operate, resulting in a polycentric context for such communication phenomena – that is, a context in which multiple normative complexes are simultaneously at work, but are of a different order' (Blommaert 2010: 61). This theorization allows us to see authenticity (and all identity projects) as something multifaceted, dynamic, and adjustable rather than an essentialized monolithic pregiven, something that evolves out of multi-scalar, polycentric social practices and complex processes of navigation and negotiation, i.e. 'authentication' (Bucholtz 2003). Building on this, Blommaert and Varis (2011) further develop a heuristics of authenticity. They posit that contemporary identities are about discursive orientations towards specific sets of emblematic resources arranged by a multitude of – never random, and sometimes conflicting – micro-hegemonized niches, for which individuals not only assemble resources in their repertoires accordingly, but also deploy them appropriately, i.e. they know and work with the benchmark or degree of 'enough-ness' at which a semiotic manoeuvring can adequately compromise with the various judgment calls present in a particular situation in order to pass as authentic. All of these offer crucial theoretical foundations for understanding complex authenticity in globalization.

What this paper will explore is closely connected to the above points. It investigates authenticity as semiotic processes in the context of China and its deepening globalization processes by drawing on ethnographic observations of Enshi, a remote ethnic minority area perceived and experienced as a geopolitical and sociocultural margin in China. It pays particular attention to two sociolinguistic niches emerging from Enshi's recent involvement in China's economic reform and modernization:

internet hip-hop subculture and ethnic heritage tourism. In each case, as we will soon see, authenticity is both a niched identity opportunity and a highly sensitizing issue in which a number of scaled normative frameworks, ranging from the local to the global, are brought to bear by those who, out of necessity and desire, seek new meanings of authenticity and new ways of realizing it under new conditions. The pattern of these processes is 'semiotic design', which involves deliberate and strategic effort in reassembling the local semiotic repertoire through manipulating and inventing specific semiotic resources, so as to satisfy old local norms of authenticity while gaining new translocal recognitions elsewhere.

In order to see how such processes of authenticity are played out, I will first discuss the notion of semiotic design, before moving onto the analysis of the two cases. This is followed by a critical reflection on designing 'inauthentic authenticity' as a feature and a strategy of identity making in the margins of globalization.

2 Semiotic design and authenticity

The theoretical drift of semiotic design pivotal to this paper derives mainly from the works of Gunther Kress (e.g. Hodge and Kress 1988; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001, 2006; Kress 2010; see Wang 2013 for an elaborate discussion) in which he (with his colleagues) consistently argues that the semiotic representation of meaning making has a material and a social aspect, both of which should be taken into account in order to sufficiently address all aspects of signs. A major framework accounting for the materiality of semiotics is 'multimodality' (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001, 2006; Kress 2010) in which each mode of presentation – the visual, the aural, the gestural, etc., in addition to the linguistic mode – serves as a form of semiotic resource that offer particular material and meaning possibilities: 'affordances'. By integrating various modes and their affordances, a coherent, i.e. ordered semiotic ensemble is produced, according to culturally informed and context specific principles of composition. In this sense, the materiality of semiotics is inherently social, embedded in the social processes of meaning making. This is the fundamental point in Kress's model of Social Semiotics.

One central concern in Social Semiotics is about semiotic design. As Kress explains,

> … signs are always newly *made* in social interaction; signs are motivated, not *arbitrary* relations of meaning and form; the motivated relation of a *form* and a *meaning* is based on and arises out of the *interest* of makers of signs; the forms/signifiers which are used in the making of signs are *made* in social interaction and become part of the semiotic resources of a culture. (Kress 2010: 54–55, original emphases)

These assumptions shift our focus from product to practice and – as Kress (2010: 6) holds – from the semiotics of *competence* (emphasizing the stability of social regulation) to that of *design* (emphasizing the dynamics in human agency). They indicate that what makes Social Semiotics 'social' has much to do with sign-makers as semiotic designers and how they actively engage with and shape the social and semiotic world through prospective 'design thinking' and 'production thinking' in fusing form and meaning, in other words, selecting semiotic forms of representation in such a way that they can – in Kress's term – 'aptly' express the meanings that the sign-makers wished to make (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001).

According to Kress (2004: 111), '[t]he sign … reflects the interests of its de-signer as much as the designer's imagined sense of those who will see and read the sign. The sign is based on a specific rhetorical purpose, an intent to persuade with all means possible those who pass by and notice it.' That is to say, how a sign is semiotically realized is notably driven by the social organization of the participants and, based on this, how the designer believes it will be received and interpreted by potential audiences. The 'reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee' (Bakhtin 1984: 86) in semiotic design is essentially a social one, anchored in the hierarchically organized power structure and ideological influences that produce norms, authority, and asymmetrical participatory relations in which the question of design is always subject to and refereed by those who have more control over evaluation and judgment on meaning making.

Moreover, Kress asserts that design is an agentive, forward-looking act, 'a means of projecting an individual's interest into their world with the intent of effect in the future' (Kress 2010: 23). Put differently, design involves deliberate semiotic manoeuvrings made from a proleptic[3] perspective, as both a (retrospective) response to certain social conditions and a (prospective) modification and innovation that aim to make changes and transformations. Hence, sign-makers are seen not just 'as users of norms or systems of stable practices, but as constant transformers of these' (Kress 2002: 19). Their proleptic perspective is founded upon the historically developed understanding of society, but it also puts them in a position of anticipation in which their semiotic work perpetually orients towards new possibilities of meaning remaking and transforming through design and, in doing so, transforms social relations and subjectivity. From this perspective, semiotic design is a strategic social action that deals with inequality through creative rearrangement and transformation of resources as symbolic power in communication. It then opens up spaces for individuals to symbolically rework their identities.

Kress's social-semiotic theory of design offers us a useful toolkit. Its emphasis on human agency and proleptic orientation in design helps us in addressing the semiotic deliberations and strategies as 'tactics' of authentication and inter-subjectivity in pursuing authenticity (cf. Bucholtz 2003). Let me make this point clearer by referring

[3] I am grateful to Jan Blommaert for drawing my attention to this concept.

to Kress again (2010: 23, original emphases): '*design* is an assertion of the individual's interest in participating appropriately in the social and communicational world; and an insistence on their capacity to shape their interests through the *design* of messages with the resources available to them in specific situations.'

These are the main motifs through which authenticity as semiotic processes is understood and achieved. With these in mind, we are now ready to discuss the stories from Enshi in a globalizing China.

3 Designing for authenticity in Enshi

Enshi is officially known as Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture.[4] It is located in the southwestern corner of Hubei Province in Central China (see Figure 1), with a land area of about 24,000 square kilometres, mostly inaccessible rural mountains with low agricultural productivity, and a population of over 3.9 million according to China's 2010 population census: approximately 45% are Han (the Chinese Majority), 46% are Tujia (the local indigenous group), 6% are Miao, and 3% consists of twenty-six other smaller minority groups.

Figure 1: A map of Enshi in China (adapted from Zhu et al. 2008)

[4] Tujia and Miao are two of China's fifty-six officially categorized ethnic groups. The largest group is Han, constituting more than 90% of China's total population. The other fifty-five groups are minorities or, as known in China, nationalities.

Due to geographical facts, Enshi has long suffered from physical isolation and historical detachment from the nearby regions and the centres of China. Its political economy was traditionally predominated by feudalist petty peasant livelihoods which, as recorded in Jerome Ch'en's (1992) account of life of 'the high-landers' in this part of the world at the turn of the twentieth century, was further devastated by the fall of the late imperial and subsequent wars in the country. After 1949, Enshi has remained geopolitical marginal. It has been identified by the central government's poverty reduction program as one of the poorest areas. To date, it is still labelled as a typically *lao* ('old' – referring to those extremely impoverished areas that served as revolutionary bases during the war years), *shao* ('ethnic minority'), *bian* ('frontier' or 'peripheral'), *shan* ('mountain-locked'), and *qiong* ('poverty-stricken') area in China's public and official discourses.

Such qualifications constitute a powerful modernist order of authenticity in which Enshi – similar to other marginal(ized) places – is positioned: a mythic place that is eternally primordial, minority, traditional, local, poor, distant, marginal, and so forth (see Figure 2). This imagery operates as a form of symbolic violence that has serious sociolinguistic repercussions. Not only the local *fangyan* (dialect in contrast with the Standard Chinese *Putonghua*), but all other aspects of local identities fall within this framework of how Enshi is perceived – from the perspective of the centres, at the nation-state scale-level. It produces discourses of stigmatization of Enshi that are easily found in everyday life and deeply enregistered as the 'authentic' Enshi identity.

Figure 2: An image of Enshi by Xinhua,[5] China's top official news agency

[5] http://www.hb.xinhuanet.com/2007zfwq/2007-10/19/content_11448240.htm

More recently, Enshi has been gradually integrated into the national scheme of economic reform and development as China's processes of globalization deepen. In 2000, the area was absorbed into the country's Great Western Development Plan[6] and, consequently, found itself confronted with unprecedented opportunities and new challenges. Most of these opportunities are economic ones: influxes of investments, trade and business, but also infrastructures such as transport systems and the internet. Amid the nationwide drive to modernization and globalization, people in Enshi are becoming more conscious than ever that these opportunities come with increasing possibilities of repositioning and gaining mobility by breaking out of the confinement of locality, economically and socially, physically and symbolically. The cases presented here are two such examples: one of internet hip-hop subculture, and one of ethnic heritage tourism. Each represents a particular sociolinguistic niche emerged during Ensh's globalization in which the established order of authenticity is called into question, and in which semiotic design becomes a prominent mechanism of exploring new meanings of authenticity and new ways of expressing it to fit the new conditions. This, as will become clear below, involves challenging and complex processes.

3.1 An unqualified Enshi rapper

Let us begin with the story of a self-branded 'unqualified' dialect rapper in Enshi. Like in urban centres of China, with globalization and the recent availability of the internet, local youth in rural places like Enshi also have a chance to participate in global transcultural flows such as hip-hop, producing their own voices through this form of music and verbal art, and reaching out to translocal audiences at little cost. A pioneer of this emerging internet hip-hop subculture in Enshi is Zeng Kun, a young man who embraces the new semiotic opportunity provided by the global flows of hip-hop ideology of 'keepin' it real' (cf. Pennycook 2007a, 2007b) and enhanced by digital technology for negotiating and re-constructing his own authenticity, but also in the more general sense of locality, for which he has become somewhat a grassroots celebrity among the local community. We can see his semiotic work of authenticity in the excerpt in Figure 3 from one of his online rap songs entitled 'I am not a qualified dialect rapper.'[7]

[6] In early 2000, China's central government launched the Great Western Development Plan to further its internal economic reform and modernization and, in particular, as a strategy to address the increasing imbalance between the affluent eastern coastal areas and the underdeveloped western inlands. Later that year, adjustments were made so that Enshi and a number of other places were added to the Plan. The Great Western Development Plan envisions a fifty-year scheme over three phases. It is by far the largest and the most invested government plan with the most profound changes to China so far.

[7] http://yyfc.iq123.com/play.aspx?reg_id=1927818andsong_id=3468151 (accessed 23 September 2014, my translation).

我不是一个称职的方言 raper	I'm not a qualified dialect rapper (line1)
我只是，把看到的东西全部编成 rap	I just take what I see to compose rap (line2)
一个沉迷颓废节奏的超级纯正哈 ber	Someone addicted to decadent rhythms, a super pure fool (line3)
更不是你们想象中拥有 superpower	Neither am I like what you imagine with superpower (line4)
我不是一个称职的恩施方言 raper	I'm not a qualified Enshi dialect rapper (line5)
我只是，用节奏和文字乱喊的小娃 er	I just scat in rhythms and words like a small kid (line6)
一个陶醉自我音乐的超级纯正哈 ber	Someone revels in their own music, a super pure fool (line7)
完全不需要听众给我竖起指姆 er	No need at all for the audiences to give me the thumbs-up (line8)

Figure 3: Lyrics of 'I am not a qualified dialect rapper' by Zeng Kun, translated by the author

At first glance, this may not look very special, just mainly written in Standard Chinese with odd instances of what appears to be English attached to each line, therefore broken, impure and inauthentic for some. But I would argue the contrary: this is a small but typical example of the rapper's ingenious work of semiotic design. It not only raises the question of being 'qualified' (or not), i.e. of authenticity, at the meta-cultural level, but also answers this question by way of semiotic design: the rapper deploys the resources he has in his repertoire in such a way that they, against all social and linguistic odds and constraints, maximally and aptly attend to the expectations of authenticity on multiple scales, thus, showing that he is exactly the opposite of unqualified and inauthentic. In other words, the rapper authenticates himself via the metapragmatic, indexical rather than overt and explicit organization (cf. Silverstein 1993) of his work. The patchwork we see above is not a random scramble of signs; it is put in a specific shape motivated by what the rapper believes to be authentic and an authentic way to express it. To see how this works, we must examine closely the semiotic features observable in the lyrics. But before that, we need to first grasp some understanding about the complexity in the orders of authenticity surrounding the rapper that come with the new semiotic opportunity and how this may impact on his processes of authentication through semiotic design. We will see how several different orders of authenticity, valid at several scale-levels such as the global, national, and local, interact in highly intricate ways within a domain which is, therefore, intrinsically polycentric.

A first order of authenticity here is that of the global cultural format of hip-hop as 'a multimodal … semiotics of music, lyrics, movements, and dress that articulates political and sub-cultural anti-hegemonic rebellion as well as aesthetics, a philosophy of life, and a particular range of identities' (Blommaert 2010: 19). The global spread of hip-hop, as Pennycook (2007b: 103) argues, is in fact

> the global spread of authenticity' in which 'a tension between on the one hand the spread of a cultural dictate to adhere to certain principles of what it means to be authentic, and on the other hand, a process of localization that makes such an expression of staying true

> to oneself dependent on local contexts, languages, cultures, and understandings of the real.

This means that to be authentic in hip-hop terms, one has to incorporate elements that are valid and recognizable on the global scale-level, such as the music genre, the fashion style, and, frequently, the use of (African-American) English, as well as those on the local scale-level, often the use of local language varieties and local themes of stories and people (see e.g. Alim, Ibrahim and Pennycook 2009). These aspects are blended together to form a multimodal, hybridized semiotic ensemble. Such is the global hip-hop ideology of authenticity, and it provides the overall blueprint of semiotization of authenticity here. This leads to two sets of issues faced by the Enshi rapper: how authenticity is understood in his local context, and what semiotic resources he has in order to articulate authenticity on his own terms and still can be recognized by both local and nonlocal audiences.

As another order of authenticity, the local context is multi-layered and polycentric, characterized by marginality in multiple senses of the word, as mentioned earlier (see also Wang 2012). The same can be said about our rapper Zeng Kun as a heavily marginalized individual in Chinese society: a school dropout, an ex-offender, and consequently an unemployed idler and a stigmatized individual who is severely stuck in the low end of a 'backward' place. So, for Zeng Kun, internet hip-hop provides a real niche and a rare opportunity to break out of social and physical confinement, to struggle against social marginalization and stigmatization, and to have his own voice heard (see Figure 4). Doing this in the virtual environment where audiences are invisible and potentially nonlocal requires him to carefully design his work. It takes proleptic thinking to ensure his work is maximally noticed, understood and acknowledged, and, authenticated. Here, then, comes into play the issue of language.

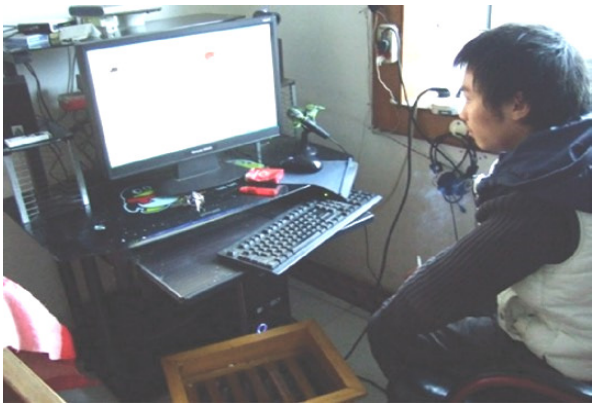

Figure 4: Internet hip-hop as a niche for Zeng Kun in Enshi (©Xuan Wang)

The issue of language is twofold, to do with the politics of language in China on the one hand, and the rapper's repertoire, on the other hand. China is a society with immense linguistic and cultural diversity, but China is also a nation-state that upholds the 'monoglot ideology' (cf. Silverstein 1996) in which the superiority of Putonghua is institutionally supported and widely enregistered. By contrast, English as a foreign language is controlled and excluded by formal policies, while fangyan is invariably stigmatized and endangered, especially smaller ones (such as Enshi fangyan), which are underdeveloped with no orthographic form and restricted sociolinguistic functions (cf. Chen 1996; see Wang 2012). This of course affects what counts as semiotic authenticity in terms of language use in Chinese society. Related to this, and shaped by this, is the structure of the rapper's linguistic repertoire. He mainly speaks Enshi fangyan, the deeply local vernacular of his native town. He also has a good mastery of Standard Chinese. But he has little access to English. The few words he knows were, apart from distant memories of unfinished schooling, mainly picked up from foreign films and music circulated online. This highly truncated repertoire poses challenges to his semiotization of hip-hop for wide audiences.

In the light of these conditions, we can now return to the excerpt shown earlier and see how different aspects of authenticity are enacted and transformed by Zeng Kun through his semiotic design. We see a number of simultaneous manoeuvrings, and to dissect them, the concept of multimodality is indispensable.

Although, visually, we may say that the rapper adopts the script and the (literary poetic) register of Standard Chinese for writing the lyrics, in the aural mode, he uses distinct acoustic features of Enshi fangyan. Because of the primacy of aural experience in music, these acoustic features mark the rap song as an Enshi dialect song. They are used to flag up defining features of locality – an orientation towards the local audiences, also a crucial strategy for constructing hip-hop authenticity in a global environment as well as the rapper's sense of self. The fact that they are blended with the visual/written and stylistic features of the standard variety means that the lyrics can also be understood by nonlocals and nonspeakers of Enshi dialect, visually via a computer. This design is a gesture towards the kind of authenticity Standard Chinese symbolizes in terms of language ideology at the nation-state scale-level. It is also a practical choice due to the underdeveloped orthography of fangyan in the written mode, the mode that is demanded in digital communication. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the superimposition of dialectal acoustic features onto the literary poetic style of the lyrics that only Standard Chinese can be used for, signals a rejection of the monoglot standard and, therefore, a reassertion of the rapper's local affiliation.

This is added with the non-Chinese-looking bits of signs written alphabetically at the end of each line. Again, these consist of two types of designs. Those in lines 1, 2, and 5 of Figure 3 are lexical items taken from English, albeit heavily *localized* versions of the words 'rap', 'rapper', and 'superpower'. Their localization appears either as a visible misspelling, i.e. 'raper' instead of 'rapper', or as aural features of local accents,

i.e. 'raapu' instead of 'rap', and 'superpouer' instead of 'superpower'. The choice of English as the semiotic code and of the specific English words made here – 'rap', 'rapper', and 'superpower' – are clearly manoeuvrings emblematic of hip-hop as a global culture, therefore, indexing (hip-hop) authenticity on the global scale-level while addressing audiences on that scale-level.

Yet, the use of English seems minimal, and what is there is deviant in one way or another. To some extent, this can be explained by the rapper's repertoire, the fact that his knowledge of English is extremely limited, so he is using *all that he can* from his repertoire – this suggests 'aptness' in design. In fact, while his *linguistic* knowledge of English is limited, he has a good *sociolinguistic* knowledge of English and its indexical values, and he applies it accordingly in his work. However, the rapper's use of English can also be seen as a design for articulating another kind of authenticity, one that is affiliated to his locality, as its rendering of features of local 'accents' indicates a process not of reproduction, but *appropriation* of English that orients towards the local scale-level. The three words are only English to the eyes of non-speakers of Chinese: for Chinese speakers, especially Enshi fangyan speakers, they have been re-embedded and resemiotized in the local micro-linguistic and macro-social contexts, which causes changes in their sound, spelling and function, thus, they are better understood as Chinese, even Enshi fangyan in this case, rather than English. In this sense, the rapper's use of English constitutes a semiotic transformation.

Finally, let us turn to the English-looking items 'er' and 'ber' the rapper has put at the end of lines 3, 6, 7, and 8 in Figure 3. Even though they may 'look' like language forms derived from English, these items have little to do with English. Their meaning and function only become clear when we listen to the lyrics: they are actually attached to the Chinese units immediately before as part of the words '哈 ber' ('idiot'), '小娃 er' ('child'), and '指姆 er' ('thumb'). These are all words specific of the deep local vernacular of the rapper's hometown. Just like 'rap', 'raper', and 'superpower' are (English) in contrast with the rest of the (Chinese) sentences they are in, these vernacular fangyan words form a contrast with the rest of the sentences they are in which use formal literary poetic Chinese. The rapper chooses alphabetical script for encoding the particular dialectal feature of 'er' in each word for two purposes. He is unsatisfied with the writing of these words in the standard Chinese script,[8] which would appear as three individual units – 哈巴儿，小娃儿, and 指姆儿 – therefore cannot capture the acoustic feature of syllabic integration of 'er' in them, notably in 'ber'. But he again knows that the lack of orthography of fangyan makes these features difficult to represent. Hence he opts for the alphabetical system.

This choice is out of interest and necessity as well as aesthetic. By adopting alphabetical letters for encoding local fangyan words, the rapper creates a poetic pattern visually, acoustically and stylistically in one hip-hop beat. One may suggest that this strategy of his simultaneously caters to audiences on the local (via fangyan), the

[8] This insight was obtained through interviews with Zeng Kun in Enshi in December 2009.

national (via Standard Chinese orthography and register) and the global (via English and alphabetical script) scale-levels, thus gives himself maximal potential to be heard and recognized.

Practices of semiotic design are, as shown above, evident and vigorous in the work of the Enshi rapper who, in every semiotic move, produces proleptic orientations towards multiple centres and audiences as ratifiers of authenticity on different scale-levels. The internet affords the platform of communicating and performing it from his locality, and global hip-hop culture the cultural genre. The outcome of the design may look messy and inauthentic, but only if we insist on a particular order of authenticity. If we understand semiosis as multi-scalar and polycentric, we will accept that it in fact involves clever and meticulous design and craftsmanship that make use of the semiotic resources in the repertoire, while using them aptly and appropriately so that the potential uptake and recognition of the effects they afford are maximized. This appropriateness is not simply about meeting the normative expectations – as we have seen – it entails a distinct carnivalesque aspect in which the rapper strategically and creatively deploys semiotics to subvert and 'counter-authenticate' hegemonic assumptions about authenticity that are relevant to his language use as well as his social positioning. The intensive shifts in his semiotic features and ideologies of authenticity in multiple modes and on multiple scales produce a heteroglossic voice through which inauthentic-looking authenticity is articulated and transformed.

3.2 An authentic Tujia costume

Above we have seen a case of semiotic design as an individual endeavour for authenticity through internet hip-hop subculture in Enshi. We have seen in particular how authenticity is semiotically played out at a micro-linguistic level. We are now moving onto our second case, at a macro-institutional level, in which authenticity centres on the issue of the semiotic representation of *minzu* (nationality) or ethnicity in Enshi's new heritage tourism economy.

Although (ethnic) heritage tourism has become a global phenomenon, it only became an economic opportunity for Enshi very recently, as a knock-on effect of China's economic reform policy of 1979. Tourism in Enshi began in the late 1980s, after its reintegration and recognition as a minority region, when its natural scenery of deep mountains and local culture were politically reframed and economically repackaged, turning from an image of wilderness and underdevelopment into one of rare beauty, ecological privilege, and nostalgic pre-modern rural living. This indicates a symbolic shift in the order of authenticity that has historically stigmatized Enshi. The impact of this stayed limited for a long time, partly due to the severe lack of local transport infrastructures and tourist facilities, and partly due to the competition from nearby southwestern minority regions, perceived to have much stronger cultural characteristics. Authenticity, in the tourist market, is uniqueness. For Enshi, the

question is how features of unique 'minoritiness' can be made recognizable and marketable through appropriate semiotic representation.

Since joining the national Great Western Development Plan in 2000, the need for Enshi to reorganize its economic structure and to place its nascent tourist industry in a strategic position has become greater. In 2006, Enshi was endorsed by its provincial government into the eco-cultural tourism development zone based in the local mountainous regions. Enshi is encouraged to regenerate and enhance, among a number of other potentials, its '*minzu* cultural characteristics', that is, the local ethnic minority uniqueness. All of these have reopened the old question of how to 'play the *minzu* card' – first raised by the prefectural government in the 1990s – as a core strategy for Enshi's tourism and overall economic development. It has prompted a new wave of institutional discourses and actions on 'strengthening the cultural foundations' and 'combining *minzu* culture and tourism' for (re)branding and (re)marketing Enshi as an ethnic minority area.

Much of this wave revolves around the semiotic representation of the Tujia, the local indigenous group that embodies Enshi. In particular, a set of 'authentic' Tujia ethnic clothing must be designed that can increase the market visibility of Enshi. A series of activities to actually design Tujia clothing have been coordinated by the local communities and supported by the prefectural government. For instance, the twentieth anniversary of Enshi Prefecture in 2003 was used as a special occasion on which the elegance and distinction of Tujia clothing was emphasized and showcased to the media. In 2006, the Fashion Design department of Enshi Vocational and Technological Institute organized a special event inviting designs of the perfect Tujia clothing. Following that, in 2010 and 2011, a new and larger-scale design competition was again led by the prefectural government, involving forums and consultations by local scholars, community leaders, and the media (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Designing authentic Tujia clothing in Enshi (©Xuan Wang)

What we have here is a example of semiotic design entirely generated by processes of globalization. It is stimulated by the local uptake of heritage tourism within the global new economy, in which designing ethnic clothing was part of the commodification of the Tujia semiotic representation. This is a widely observed phenomenon in heritage tourism, critiqued for its 'staged authenticity' (cf. MacCannell 1973) in which the assumed original meaning and representation of cultural practices that belong to a certain ethnic group are distorted and re-packaged for 'sale', i.e. for satisfying the kind of authenticity demanded by the tourists. Indeed, the semiotic design in Enshi's tourist industry is astonishingly widespread: in addition to the Tujia clothing, design is also applied to the local ethnic dance, architecture, food, rituals, and the entire city layout of Enshi's capital – even the airplanes that travel between Enshi and the major cities in China are designed by the prefectural government as a 'flying business card' with the crafts named after Enshi and painted with images of Tujia people dancing in their colourful ethnic clothing (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Flight Enshi, a flying business card[9]

However, the semiotic design, especially of the Tujia ethnic dress, cannot be seen simply as something inspired by the global authenticity for heritage tourism alone. It is deeply connected to another, more heartfelt question of authenticity to do with the local ethnic identity of Tujia, namely, the recognition of the minority status of Tujia in Enshi. This is a complex issue that involves Enshi's local history of identity formation and China's state ethnopolitics of multiculturalism; the current (re)semiotization of the Tujia clothing has to take both into account.

The establishment of Enshi's minority status through its ethnic population of Tujia was a convoluted story. In the process of nation building after 1949, the Chinese

[9] http://www.cnhubei.com/news/gdxw/201006/t1233337.shtml (accessed 23 September 2014)

government implemented ethnic classification in order to give recognition to minority groups and to integrate them into a 'unified, multinational country'. A large number of the fifty-five minority groups we now know in China were officially identified in the early 1950s. Each ethnic group, called *minzu*, (supposedly) has its own territory, common history and economy, unique language, culture, and tradition. However, as Thomas Mullaney (2011) shows in his account of this part of Chinese history, the ethnotaxonomy applied at the time had its epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations in Western modernist social scientific beliefs in disciplines such as linguistics and ethnology. It was unable to clearly define all ethnic groups according to pre-assumed, fixed categories such as language or specific cultural traits. Tujia was not recognized until 1957 because the group had been mixing and living together with other groups; they lacked the obvious cultural features that make them visibly different from the other groups. Its classification was prompted accidentally when a minority representative of Miao from a town bordering Hunan and Hubei provinces pleaded with the central government to 'reclassify' her and her people in Hunan as Tujia, since their language was different from that of the Miao.

However, whereas areas in Western Hunan were officially recognized in 1957 as Tujia territories based on the locals' self-identification and fieldwork by Chinese ethnologists in those areas, their adjacent neighbours in Enshi, Western Hubei, did not receive the same recognition. The ethnic classification was soon brought to a halt with the change of political climate in China when claiming any different identity risked being seen as counter-revolutionary splitism. It was not until after the Cultural Revolution that the ethnic classification was resumed, to address some of the issues left over from two decades ago. Enshi's case reopened.

Melissa Brown (2001, 2002) records that when Tujia status reclassification and restoration started in Enshi in early 1980s, many of the local people were unwilling to *become* Tujia since they 'did not have Tujia consciousness' (Brown 2002: 375) and preferred to consider themselves Han. She argues that the categories of ethnic boundary and distinction created by the local government – mainly by genealogical information and history of residence – did not reflect the actual cultural practice and socio-political experience of the individuals; it was a 'manipulation' of population statistics based on an artificial dichotomy between Tujia and Han, a tactic of authentication by the local government that was 'both economically beneficial and politically safe' for the local populace as a whole (Brown 2002: 389). The disjuncture between the state recognition and the local sense of self-observed here illustrates the sensitivity and power dynamics of authenticity in relation to ethnic identity in China – particularly so for Enshi – in which the influence of the state prevails. It also shows how traditions often are the product of social invention (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and how authenticity is always emergent from negotiations and power strategies.

Within such a historical context, we begin to understand the anxiety in Enshi about its authenticity, in terms of its own ethnic identity and cultural heritage, and

its need for a legitimate semiotic representation of these (such as authentic ethnic clothing) that is all the more important, especially in the eyes of the State. This, then, leads us to a further complication: the particular order of authenticity about the semiotization of ethnicity imposed by the state ethnopolitics of multiculturalism and its representation.

Figure 7: Fifty-six minzu in China[10]

China's self-imagination as a unified, multi-ethnic nation is projected through an image of fifty-six (Han the Majority and fifty-five minority groups) equally positioned but uniquely different *minzu* (see Figure 7). The visible uniqueness in semiotic representation, i.e. ethnic clothing, is particularly important, for it is through the omnipresent display of the juxtaposition of technicoloured 'traditional' clothing that China's multiculturalism, diversity, and unity are constructed and expressed. The (over)emphasis on the colourfulness and distinctness of each ethnic group is based on the standardized ethnotaxonomic orthodoxy in which dress, like language or customs, becomes a *categorical* feature of ethnicity taken as the crystallization of the group's entire cultural heritage; in short, authenticity.

Meanwhile, this emphasis speaks for a view of ethnic minority from the perspective of Han, a view that presupposes authenticity of *minzu* as primordial and historical truths, as peripheral minorities – the 'noble savage' – which, for, e.g. Gladney (1994: 94), is a project of nationalization and modernization that promotes 'the homogenization of the majority at the expense of the exoticization of the minority.' According to Gladney, this kind of ideology operates through the display and commodification of the minority Other in China, such as in state-sponsored media and

[10] http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2005-09/17/content_3501742.htm

tourism. Thus, we see that the state politics of representation works as a powerful ideology of authenticity framing the semiotization of ethnic clothing.

For the Tujia in Enshi, the local desire for authenticity through the semiotic design of ethnic clothing has to be understood in relation to the complex orders of authenticity outlined above. What is noteworthy in this case is the strong emphasis on and concerted effort in semiotic design as a consensus of the local people led by the local government. This, as we have seen, is both afforded and conditioned by the global economy and the state multiculturalism, both of which demand the supply of a kind of Tujia clothing that can satisfy their expectations of what counts as authentic, i.e. a distinctive repository of tradition and difference (from the Han), even if invented. What the local government and institutions are doing is to deliberately combine the frameworks of semiotic representation given at the global level and the nation-state level, and use these as a niched opportunity for embarking on a local identity project. In this project, they create something that may not necessarily possess intrinsic authenticity, but can still be recognized as legitimate and appropriate nationally and globally, in exchange for potential economic development and political purchase, thus, social mobility. In this sense, their semiotic design is a tactic of authentication through which they symbolically take advantage of and transform the existing orders of authenticity for their own identity making as a group. It, therefore, produces inauthentic authenticity.

4 Inauthentic authenticity in globalization

Globalization creates niched semiotic opportunities for the margins in which previously 'inauthentic' semiotic resources acquire new sociocultural values and meanings of authenticity. Nevertheless, to capitalize these resources for constructing an authentic identity – whether for an individual or a group – requires careful semiotic design, which, as we have seen, works on two different levels. For the internet rapper, design is particularly useful for organizing a micro-linguistic semiotic resources so that he can take advantage of the global hip-hop culture as a new genre to express himself locally while sabotaging and subverting dominant ideas of authenticity, and use the semiotic resources in his repertoire effectively for this purpose.

In the case of ethnic heritage tourism, semiotic design is seen as an identity manoeuvre at a macro-institutional level. It hinges on China's politics of multiculturalism as well as Enshi's local history of ethnic identification and authentication. Through these aspects, we see semiotic design as a discursively contrived tactic of transforming power relations. Here the product is seen secondary to the socio-political processes that underpin and motivate the idea and the act of design.

Together these two cases in this paper demonstrate that semiotic practices are materially observable; more importantly, they are socially and symbolically invested and susceptible to power dynamics. Their use is never random, but always shaped by

their users with a proleptic view of the complex social environment. It is therefore human agency that we need to pay attention to in order to see how semiotics is actually created, used, and transformed for identity making in real life.

Enshi also offers some insights into authenticity. It is clear that authenticity is far from being a matter of good or bad, true or false, existing or invented. It is an ongoing project in which people engage themselves in the practice of design, of seeking multiple meanings of authenticity (or the plurality of competing 'authenticities', as emphasized by both Faudree [2015] and Wilce and Fenigsen [2015]) in each sign-making because our conditions of communication are becoming increasingly multi-scalar and polycentric in the context of globalization. Authenticity, therefore, is better seen as something that is multifocal, fragmented, layered, and hybridized, something that is power invested and involves transgression, innovation, and transformation in which our pursuit of authenticity becomes 'a profound and methodical investigation of how to understand ourselves, our histories and how the boundaries of thought may be traversed' (Pennycook 2007a: 42), in order to create new possibilities of becoming. Such features render the term itself a paradox, as its very substance is made of reordering and change of authenticity, thus, inauthenticity – which, as Kress has rightly pointed out, is a social action in anticipation of future effect. This 'in-authentic authenticity', for sure a somewhat puzzling phrase, captures the very essence of our quest for authentic identities in a globalizing world. In this sense, the semiotic design of inauthentic authenticity is both a feature and a strategy of identity making that strives for voice and mobility through social and symbolic manoeuvring, particularly so for those in the margins of globalization, as we have seen in the examples from Enshi.

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CHAPTER 8

Fangyan and the linguistic landscapes of authenticity: Normativity and innovativity of writing in globalizing China

1 Introduction[1]

In this paper, I examine 'the tyranny of writing' — interpreted here as the systemic conventionalization, control, and modification inherent to writing as a set of social practices (cf. Coulmas 2013) — in relation to language and processes of globalization in China, asking to what extent old and new sociolinguistic conditions may reorganize the regime of writing Chinese in a globalizing era. Following the recent calls for a sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert 2010; Coupland 2010), particularly of globalization in the margins (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013; Wang et al. 2014), I draw ethnographic attention to the novel, highly innovative and dynamic phenomenon of writing Chinese fangyan. Fangyan literally means 'local speech' or 'dialect', a label for non-standard vernaculars (used by the majority Han Chinese speakers), sometimes also minority languages (used by non-Han speakers), thus invariably marginalized language resources (more on this below). Fangyan as a sociolinguistic margin, I will argue, offers a vantage point for observing the dynamic of normativity and innovativity surrounding writing in contemporary China.

Fangyan and the normative obstacles attached to its writing (as well as speaking) need to be understood within China's historical sociocultural context of linguistic diversity and monocentric normativity, mainly surrounding the overwhelming dominance of ortho-graphy based on the standardized Chinese variety Putonghua (the Common Speech) — a point crucial to any discussion on the writing of Chinese (cf. Chen 1996; Wang 2012; Li 2017). The fangyan inscriptions illustrating the shifting practices of writing in this study, nevertheless, emerge from China's current processes of globalization. More precisely, I will address public signage produced in fangyan and emerged from a case of local and peripheral uptake of the globalized new economy of heritage tourism. Such writing belongs to semiotic manoeuvres that are prompted by, and indexical of, their unprecedented mobility and complexity of language resources, their underlying structural changes and new meaning-making potential as a result of

[1] This chapter has been accepted for publication as X. Wang (2018). Fangyan and the linguistic landscapes of authenticity: Normativity and innovativity of writing in globalizing China. In C. Weth and K. Juffermans (eds.), *The tyranny of writing: ideologies of the written word* (pp. 267–296). London: Bloomsbury.

globalization, i.e. processes of the present stage of human history that are characterized by, among other things, the global expansion of (online and offline) capitalism and intensifying centre-periphery interactions (Blommaert 2010; Pennycook 2012; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013). China and Chinese are part of this scene, and studies such as this one have to engage not only with the issues of writing as a sociolinguistic phenomenon within the context of China, but also with the key debates in the sociolinguistic theorization of globalization.

In what follows, I will highlight three aspects from such interweaving perspectives. First, I will discuss the theoretical assumptions drawn from linguistic landscaping studies (henceforth LLS) for addressing public fangyan signs on a heritage tourism site in this study. This leads further to two issues: one, the normative ideology and practices that have shaped the writing practices of (nonstandard) Chinese today; two, the imperative of 'authenticity' in heritage tourism as a new economic as well as identity and writing opportunity (also with normative constraints), operating alongside the established norms. Together, these aspects will elucidate the particular arguments about normativity and innovativity surrounding the 'tyranny of writing' developed in this study.

Applied initially as a user-friendly tool to detect sociolinguistic diversity (e.g. Gorter 2006; Barni and Extra 2008), LLS's potential as an ontological and methodological approach enabling the careful study of dynamic and complex sociolinguistic environments is progressively realized (Blommaert 2013; Soler-Carbonell 2016; see O'Connor and Zentz 2016 for a recent survey of debates). This potential is particularly promising when the synchronic 'snapshot' quality of observation focusing on *products of writing* is combined with an analytical framework that draws on a historicizing ethnographic perspective, in which multimodal public signs are seen as 'motivated' *practices of writing* in the sense of Kress (2010: 10): 'based on […] the interest of the sign-maker; using […] culturally available resources', and deployed in a non-neutral historical space (Blommaert 2013: 23), where they index specific social positions taken by their inscribers in public space.

This public space is becoming increasingly complex as a field of contest due to the fact that the space-time compression in globalization processes more than ever binds together the *longue durée* and present-day events, as well as economically, politically and culturally uneven power geometries such as the (relative) centres and peripheries of the World-System (Massey 2005; Blommaert 2010). This is further complexified by internet technology, with 'offline' social life increasingly interacting with what happens 'online', resulting in 'communication in a field of power' wherein multiple and competing normative regimes representing different historicities and speeds of development can co-occur and create dynamic, multiscalar synchronic 'scapes' (Blommaert and Maly 2016: 199; see also Soler-Carbonell 2016). It is in this sense that LLS attempt to bring about a particular imagination of sociolinguistic reality characterized as unstable, unfinished, complex and dynamic, an ontological orientation that marks LLS out

as an ethnographically and historically grounded approach (Blommaert 2013; Blommaert and Maly 2016).

Adopting the LLS approach in this study will enable us to dissect the co-occurring old and new sociolinguistic conditions of writing in a globalizing Chinese society, and to observe the public inscriptions of fangyan with more nuance: as a specific set of language resources with specific, enregistered sociolinguistic features, capacities and connotations (i.e. nonstandard varieties), deployed in a specific way and social arena (i.e. designed as public signs), for specific purposes in view of globalization (i.e. to bespeak a sense of authenticity in the new economy of heritage tourism). I will now turn briefly to the historical sociolinguistic conditions of writing fangyan in China.

Writing (or speaking) nonstandard Chinese can be a highly politicized endeavour. This is because the language ecology in China is dominated by an institutionally sponsored ideology and policy of language standardization (Dong 2011; Wang 2012), while also driven by nationalistic language purist attitudes (Li 2004) and monocentric normativity enregistered over time (Wang, Juffermans and Du 2016). Such an ecology bestows superiority to the standard(ized) variety of Putonghua and its dialect basis of Northern Mandarin over Southern Mandarin and other nonstandard varieties (including minority languages in China). Moreover, the writing of fangyan is problematized by the historical and socio-political development of *ortho*-graphy: a common logographic system of characters (known as Hanzi) has evolved over millennia — regardless of the diverse speech varieties in China — to provide a basis for a shared historical and cultural knowledge, heritage and group imagination of (Han-dominated) Chineseness (Sun 2006). This system was further consolidated and normalized by the state-led script reform and standardization processes underpinned by the nationalistic discourse of 'one state, one people, one language' (DeFrancis 1950; see also Rohsenow 2004), giving rise to the under-resourcedness and underdevelopment of Chinese fangyan (Chen 1996).

Hence, insofar as the writing system is systematically mapped onto the phonological, lexical, grammatical and register norms of the standard variety, it deprives the nonstandard vernaculars and alike of their own written representation and status of being 'authentic' language, creating a tyranny of writing in which fangyan has little socially validity or linguistic-practical capacity. As Chen (1996: 226) laments, writing fangyan borrowing the standardized ortho-graphy invariably causes confusion and misunderstanding, even for the few dialects with a literary tradition (such as Cantonese, see Li 2017 on the struggles in learning to write Chinese in a Cantonese-speaking context). Their writing is confined to highly specific cultural functions (e.g. folk art) and anything beyond may be considered 'low in prestige, often appealing to dubious taste rather than being appropriate for more formal purposes' (Chen 1996: 226). In this study, the phenomenon of fangyan should be understood in the light of sociolinguistic stigma, i.e. lacking the physical-representational resources of writing while indexing peripherality and inauthenticity, as outlined here.

Meanwhile, globalization, in this case, heritage tourism, is opening up new opportunities of writing (among other means of communication) and, through this, opportunities of (re)articulating identity processes (Giddens 1991; Castells 1997). The upsurge of identity politics occurs at various scale levels, from the level of the reinvented 'nation' to that of the self, and one common feature tying these different scales together is the development of elaborate discourses of *authenticity* (Coupland 2003; Blommaert and Varis 2013; Lacoste, Leimgruber and Breyer 2014). These discourses, as Wilce and Fenigsen (2015: 137) remind us, need to be offset against a 'de-essentialized' reality of multiple and dynamic (i.e. changing) 'authenticities' co-existing as a repertoire of identity performances.

In this study, as we will see, to articulate a sense of fundamental uniqueness invoked by *heritage* — understood as the chronotope of the 'timeless-here' that underlies essentialist conceptions of peoplehood and often involves language as a focal point (Woolard 2013) — the writing of fangyan in public signs has become *necessary*, compelled by 'authenticity' and its commodification, and is made *possible* by way of linguistic innovation. This, however, only occurs at a particular scale-level generated by the local uptake of heritage tourism, and appears as one element (i.e. the semiotics of heritage authenticity) in a poly-normative and highly dynamic sociolinguistic environment. Furthermore, the authenticity presented in these fangyan signs is connected to a broader process of 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983) in the Chinese periphery, spurred by perceived (and imposed) economic opportunities of domestic as well as global heritage tourism (Su and Teo 2009; Gao 2014; Wang 2015). In fact, many of the data presented in this paper can be seen as semiotic aspects of contemporary heritage-based 'place branding', and the linguistic landscapes are crucial instruments in that (Moore 2016; Abdelhay, Ahmed and Mohamed 2016). In this sense, rather than as a linear pointer to multilingual residential presence as in most work performed in LLS, these signs must be regarded as *aspirational* and *innovational* rather than documentary materials, and 'motivated' (in Kress' terms) by projected and evolving interests rather than by a socio-political status-quo.

In short, this study attempts to apply an ethnographically sensitive LLS reading of fangyan writing in public space, which will shed light on the complex, layered and shifting dynamics of writing practices in (nonstandard) Chinese and, through writing, of constructing 'authentic' forms of heritage-based identity in the margins of China — both, in themselves, effects of globalization processes. In the next section, I will zoom into the specific space of a heritage tourism site in China and examine in detail how the normative role of fangyan in terms of language variety and script and the innovative ways in which fangyan is written are played off in support of the local articulation of the heritage-based authenticity.

2 Writing fangyan in heritage tourism

The locus of my study is a heritage tourist site located in Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, a rural minority region located in Central China and inhabited by a mixed population of the Han majority (45%) and minority groups such as the Tujia (46%), the Miao (6%) and others. As a margin, Enshi has only recently become absorbed into the nationwide (and global) development of heritage tourism, which aims to establish a primarily domestic market base. To this end, Enshi has joined the rites of passage, so to speak, searching for authenticity through the semiotic production of heritage (Wang 2015). However, like in many other tourist spots in China, the Enshi fangyan as a semiotic and cultural material rarely emerges amidst the great efforts in establishing and staging (certain aspects of) local history and traditions for consumption. This is chiefly because, as explained above, most nonstandard Chinese vernaculars are left with little literacy resources, and less legitimacy to be rendered in writing, even if there are rising political and scholarly concerns over the rapid shrinking and dismal future of the diverse dialects, often expressed in terms of language endangerment and loss of immaterial cultural heritage.

Another important reason for the absence of the local language is to do with the minority languages of Enshi. Since Enshi is officially recognized as an ethnic minority area — based largely on its demographic statistics that the Tujia constitute the local majority population — the Tujia language as the indigenous language assumes a more 'authentic' status than other language resources (such as Miao) for representing the local ethnolinguistic identity and heritage. Here, however, lies the problem that Tujia is one of the severely endangered minority languages in the world, and one contributing factor of its irreversible endangerment is that it is a language without a script (Brassett and Brassett 2005).

In view of the *double invisibility* of the local languages, at least as materially and visually manipulatable resources, the linguistic landscape of Enshi as a heritage tourism market is dominated by the standard Chinese script (with occasional addition of foreign languages). In this context, the appearance of the local dialect writing in Enshi seems all the more interesting and revealing of the changing dynamics of the sociolinguistic environment.

2.1 Tujia Girls Town as public space

The particular site where the fangyan displays are found is Tujia Girls Town (Tujia Nü'er Cheng), an artificial 'ancient' town situated on the outskirts of the prefectural capital city, designed and built in traditional Tujia styles and offering various tourism and entertainment services. Its name originated from Tujia Girls Festival (Tujia Nü'er Hui), a heritage festival based on the old custom of annual market days when the local Tujia who live far apart in deep mountains gather for business; on these occasions, village girls get to date their suitors through hackling and exchanging love songs. While this

custom is disappearing even in the villages where it was first recorded, Nü'er Hui has become an official festival with the establishment of Enshi as a minority autonomous prefecture in 1983. As Enshi began to gear itself explicitly towards ethnic heritage tourism since 2007, Tujia Girls Festival was marketed as a tourist-cum-dating festival, labelled in global jargon as the 'Oriental Valentine's Day' in which domestic and overseas tourists are enticed to experience the local Tujia heritage through a personal matchmaking and romance. Opened in 2013, Tujia Girls Town serves as a major infrastructure supporting Enshi's embryonic tourism industry and the officially designated venue for showcasing Nü'er Hui and similar heritage events.

As a tourism site, Tujia Girls Town (approximately 530,000 square meters or one hundred football pitches in size) is a richly semiotized multilingual space where signs, images and texts — mostly in Chinese, and occasionally in English and Korean — are placed in every street corner and shop front (see Figure 1). It therefore constitutes a prominent site of linguistic landscaping, more specifically, of semiotic and cultural signification in a given space framed by heritage tourism. For the purpose of this study, rather than a comprehensive investigation of the site, I will focus on the display of the local fangyan and elements of the site that are pertinent to our understanding of the rarely-spotted fangyan writing.

Without delving into the linguistic details of the signs, we can make a first and general observation: seeing Enshi fangyan writing in Tujia Girls Town indicates important sociolinguistic changes triggered by local processes of globalization. Above all, it points to the fact that, in exploring the economic benefit heritage tourism may offer, Enshi is aligning itself with the global imperative of authenticity operating through the dual mechanism of heritage and tourism and, for this purpose, seeking strategic ways of representing and commodifying the authentic local (e.g. Heller 2003; Jaworski and Thurlow 2015). This logic of authenticity creates the need and room to (re)consider which particular cultural, discursive and semiotic resources can be deployed in the local repertoire and, importantly, how local signifiers such as Enshi fangyan could come into play — by somehow addressing their (in)visibility. A niche market, like that of Tujia Girls Town, is thus opened up for the local dialect by heritage tourism. It is under such new conditions, on a deliberately constructed site of concentrated heritage representation and commodification, that the writing of Enshi fangyan is practiced.

Secondly, while being integrated into the local repertoire of signifying authenticity, Enshi fangyan has gained enormous upward mobility in the sociolinguistic hierarchy. It is used alongside the globally and regionally much more upmarket resources, such as English and Korean — the latter is rising as a popular language, notably in the Chinese tourist sphere, because of South Korea's economic and cultural globalization and the influence of this on China — and of course, nationally, standard Chinese (even though the availability and uptake of these resources are far from being even, see below). In this sense, Enshi fangyan shifts from an 'inauthentic' language with writing excluded from its repertoire, to a language with newly recognized indexical, symbolic and cultural values of authenticity that are associated with locality.

Figure 1: Tujia Girls Town as a richly semiotized public space © Xuan Wang 2015

Thirdly, the encoding of Enshi fangyan necessarily involves language innovation. Even if this is no easy task, demanding careful coordination of the norms and the normative writing system (see discussion below), to give Enshi fangyan a previously non-existent (logo)graphic shape, i.e. designed materiality (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006), is to break out of the norms and constraints set by the existing language regime. In so doing, this practice expands the sociolinguistic repertoire of fangyan, and it belongs to the semiotic design of authenticity in late modernity (Wang 2012, 2015). Let us now take a closer look at the fangyan displays in Enshi's Tujia Girls Town.

2.2 Indexing authenticity through fangyan

There are twenty-eight dialect signs found in Tujia Girls Town along Nü'er Jie (Girls Street), the business street that occupies the centre of the site where all the buildings are constructed and decorated in distinct traditional-ethnic styles (see Figure 2). The signs are written with high-frequency items taken from the local vernacular, from nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs to other idiomatic expressions (see Appendix for a full list). These words and phrases are uniformly inscribed in gold-coloured simplified Hanzi in the classical font of Clerical script, with component characters laid vertically on both sides of a black diamond-shaped board, and hanging from a straw rope roughly tied to a raw wooden lamppost. The lamps, which hang adjacent to each board, underneath a tiled canopy, replicate the style of old-fashioned oil lamps from pre-electricity days and are lit at night.

Figure 2: Enshi fangyan displays in Girls Street

Judging by the location and positioning, it is clear that these fangyan displays are strategically 'emplaced' (in the sense of Scollon and Scollon 2003) on the site and presented as principal signifiers of authentic heritage. Their stately line-up in the centre of the site is clearly meant to be seen by all visitors, even when after dark. In addition,

their presentation is *stylized*, through colour, font, layout and the rustic-looking props surrounding them, in such a way that they emblematize and reinforce the 'authentic' atmosphere of traditional, local, ethnic, natural, pre-modern, etc. Together, these semiotic resources form an 'ensemble' (Kress 2010: 161) of authenticity that is spatially and temporally tied to a certain desired form of the local and its heritage.

On the other hand, these signs are eye-catching because of their novel writing: mostly improvised, non-normative fangyan writing that may well be familiar visually (as they are encoded in the official characters), but not readily transparent in linguistic and cultural meanings (due to their local embeddedness). For example, the word shown in Figure 2 is made of three characters, 矮 (ǎi, 'short') 打 (dǎ, 'to hit') and 杵 (chǔ, 'pestle'); each character is an ortho-graphic unit in the standard Chinese speech and literacy. As individual graphs at the phoneme-morphemic level they are intelligible to most Chinese speakers, however, their combination, meaning 'a shortie or midget', may not offer the same comprehensibility because it does not correspond to a fixed morphosyntactic structure in the standard writing. Even for those who know this vernacular term (which comes from the name of a small T-shape wooden tool for supporting weight from the lower back when the locals climb mountains while bearing a heavy load on their backs), they do not always know how to write it or even recognize it if it is put in writing. The (un)intelligibility of the dialect writing is at stake not only for non-local speakers and tourists, but for the locals too, most of whom see (some of) these items written down for the first time. For instance, and here we turn to the online support structures of heritage tourism, on one of the local virtual forums where images of these fangyan signs are shared,[2] the administrator comments on the obscurity of these dialect signs:

去过恩施土家女儿城的朋友有没有注意到城里悬挂着的"方言"呢？有细心网友把它们拍下来并发到咱们新恩施论坛个小编也不懂，小伙伴们快快来识别一下。

Have those who have been to Enshi Tujia Girls Town noticed the "dialect" hanging there? Some attentive internet friends have taken photographs of them and posted them in our New Enshi Forum. Surprisingly a few of them are not understandable even to the administrator [myself]. Come and identify them for yourself. (Translated by the author)

This riddle-like effect — whether true or played out by the locals just to poke fun (it is not as difficult for the local dialect speakers to work out these written forms since they are high-frequency expressions) — is arguably characteristic of *the designed semiotics of difference* that creates a sense of place-myth, thus, adding to the indexical potency of these signs in terms of authenticity. In this same spirit, writings in these signs are

[2] http://www.v2gg.com/quanzi/chengshiquanzi/ 20141103/95229.html (last accessed June 15, 2015).

sometimes even labelled as 'Tujia dialect'— instead of Enshi fangyan, as seen in one of the popular blogs reflecting on these signs:

> 巷子（当然：成都的宽窄巷子也还在建设发展中）。笔者认为：现在的恩施"女儿城"，不仅是视野开阔、环境优美、建筑古朴典雅、风景如画、气候宜人，是人们吃、喝、玩、乐、游、购、休闲等的最佳集聚地外，最值得使人欣赏的是这里的文化氛围浓厚。除了具有土家风情和文化特色的建筑群、各种反映土家人的形体艺术外，还有最让人饱眼福的土家方言（土家语）集景一条街（如图）。虽然这里只有二十几句图文并茂的土家方言集景（其实土家方言远远不止这些），但它间接的使人们直观的感受到了土家文化的底蕴深厚、博大精深、魅力无穷。笔者每次去都必须去观赏和欣赏一遍，并将其摄入相机，留作永恒的记忆。（每句方言的译义，请见图片后"土家方言分类"的解释即可）。
>
> …The author believes that today's Enshi Girls Town is a place where the horizon is broad, the environment is charming, the buildings are traditional and elegant, the sceneries are beautiful and the climate pleasant, a perfect place where people gather to dine, drink, relax, tour and shop. The most enjoyable thing is the rich cultural atmosphere here. In addition to the Tujia cultural style buildings and all kinds of performing arts that reflect the Tujia people, there is also the feast for the eyes provided by the Tujia dialect (Tujia language) street (see the pictures). Although we have here only [a collection of] twenty odd vividly illustrated Tujia dialect (in fact Tujia dialect is far more than these), they indirectly enable people to intuitively feel the deep, vast and charming Tujia culture. Each time I am there, I take a look at them and appreciate them, and capture them with my camera as a permanent memory. (See the 'Tujia Fangyan Classification' below the images for the translation of each Fangyan).
>
> (Translated by the author)

To augment the point that the 'deep, vast and charming Tujia culture' the small number of fangyan signs in Tujia Girls Town can reveal, the blogger goes on to offer six lists of similar 'Tujia dialect' expressions. Very few people would seriously dispute the blurring of boundaries between Enshi fangyan and Tujia dialect. Based on my ethnographic observation and my own understanding as a native of Enshi, the two, if they had pre-existed as separate entities, have more or less bundled together and hybridized through 'local languaging' over time (to borrow from Juffermans 2015). To the locals, it is neither necessary nor straightforward to draw a clear line between the two, especially when there is hardly any dialectological or Tujia language research to systematically record and map out either. This 'merger', for both heritage tourism and self-experience of the local ethnolinguistic practices, provides another token of authenticity.

Thus, even if the dialect displays in Tujia Girls Town are small in number, they are by no means trivial in presence or function, for their strategic spatial emplacement, semiotic design and sociolinguistic intermixing with Tujia — the local minority and hence 'authentic' language — have enabled these signs to produce considerable effects of authenticity through 'homeopathic' doses of features (Blommaert and Varis 2013: 148). Notwithstanding that the primary function of such displays of dialect writing is, as some might argue, 'for emblematic, decorative and authenticating purposes' and 'deprived of the communication function of the language' (Gao 2014: 49), their

materialization through writing does in itself uncover much of the extent to which globalization processes on the ground level afford a minoritized variety certain opportunities for language revitalization and innovation through writing. Such opportunities, as we have seen, go hand in hand with constraints brought upon by normativity, and I will unravel this further by looking into how these fangyan signs are actually written in the local space.

2.3 Writing with normativity and innovativity

Two issues are noteworthy in the writing process in which normativity is seen at play: the *ortho-graphic dependency* in inscribing the dialect words, and the *spatial (re)stratification* in which their inscription is inserted. I will begin with the first issue, which points back to the scale-level of repositioning within China: the tyranny of writing Chinese in which fangyan is understood as diverse language varieties without their own legitimate writing resources. It is therefore inevitable that dialect writing has to rely on borrowing resources from the ortho-graphic system of the standard Chinese. Put differently, the linguistic materialization of fangyan is an effort that engages simultaneously with (recent, emerging) innovativity and (older, enregistered) normativity of writing. But how does this dimension of normativity work?

Table 1 offers a breakdown of how 'orthographs' — the constituent Chinese characters of the *ortho*-graphically enregistered writing system that revolves around Putonghua and its basis of Northern Mandarin — are used in writing the twenty-eight dialect words found in Tujia Girls Town.

Group 1: units also exist as lexical or orthographic combinations in Putonghua and/or its basis of Northern Mandarin		
1	醒世，躲猫猫，答白，差火	lexical units identical in ortho-graphy and meaning to the standard variety
2	细娃儿，二黄腔，高头	popularised lexical units orginiated from southern dialect and written in ortho-graphs
3	失隔［失格］，合式［合适］	lexical units identical in meaning to the standard variety but written non-ortho-graphically
Group 2: units exist mainly in Enshi Fangyan and/or its basis of Southern Mandarin		
4	打平伙，火色，日古子， 殃疲，矮打杵，殃酸	intelligible ortho-graphic combinations but less intelligible as lexical units due to considerable difference or obscurity in meanings
5	那门［那么］，哒扑趴［跌扑 爬］，一哈哈儿［一下下儿］	less intelligible graphic combinations, closely related to the standard variety, but are written non-ortho-graphically, mainly to record the dialect pronunication features
6	奈逮［褦襶］， 打董董［打胴胴］	less intelligible graphic combinations, rarely used or non-existent in the standard varieity as lexical items, written in random hetero-graphs
7	低嘎儿，溜喇，对爪，哈咯唾， 搞拐哒，摩疲，挨哈着，嘎式	(near) unintelligible graphic combinations, unknown in the standard variety as lexical items, written in random heterographs

Table 1: Ortho-graphic norms and intelligibility in the writing of Enshi Fangyan

In this table, we see that the writing falls into two groups, with Group 1 having a high level of intelligibility to speakers of Putonghua and/or Northern Mandarin as well as speakers of Enshi fangyan and/or Southern Mandarin, whereas Group 2 is more intelligible to speakers of Enshi fangyan and/or Southern Mandarin but less so or even unintelligible to others. This differentiation in intelligibility has to do with the degree to which the written realization of the dialect can conform to the ortho-graphic norms.

In the first group, four of the dialect words (Row 1) are identical to their orthographic counterparts in form and meaning, so much so that one may even argue that they are standardized words *de facto*; three more (Row 2) are words from the southern dialects (such as Enshi fangyan) but have already been integrated into Northern Mandarin and ortho-graphized, therefore they can also be regarded as standardized words of sorts, but with a register pointing to the southern vernaculars; and two other lexical items (Row 3) are also words identical to their northern alternatives, albeit are written here non-ortho-graphically ('失隔' instead of '失格', '合式' instead of '合适') which are either ortho-graphic errors or deliberate 'accents' to make these words look dialectal.

In the second group, the situation becomes more complicated as the writing struggles to keep in line with the ortho-graphic norms that hold the key to intelligibility. The first six words in this category (Row 4) are written in ortho-graphs, but are not fully recognizable to non-speakers of Enshi fangyan and/or Southern Mandarin, since the combinations they form do not readily correspond to any meaningful, commonly-used linguistic units in the standard variety, even if they may (ortho-)graphically look so. They are dialect lexical items. The next three items (Row 5) again have limited intelligibility because part of the ortho-graphs in them are written non-ortho-graphically to indicate certain nonstandard features of pronunciation ('那门 namen' instead of '那么 name', '哒扑趴 dapupa' instead of '跌扑爬 diepupa', '一哈哈儿 yihaha'er' instead of '一下下儿 yixiaxia'er'), namely, to (hetero)graphically mark out the salient phonological difference between the local dialect and the standard variety. The following two words (Row 6) bear similar non-ortho-graphic features as they, too, are 'transliterations', borrowing somewhat random ortho-graphs, since the possible corresponding ortho-graphs are rarely in use or used for such expressions, which makes their writing semantically and culturally incomprehensible even to some local speakers. The final eight words (Row 7) are deep local dialect expressions completely written in random ortho-graphs (better called hetero-graphs), because no ortho-graphic resources are available for their writing; therefore they offer the lowest intelligibility.

Admittedly, the categorization and analysis based on Table 1 is by no means absolute or exhaustive; one could regard these as 'folk linguistics' of sorts (Preston and Niedzielski 2000). The purpose is to illuminate that, on the one hand, in designing visible materiality for these Enshi fangyan words, ortho-graphic writing resources and the norms of standardized Chinese play a critical role. They provide a form-sound-meaning axis which works as the overriding reference point towards which fangyan writing orient. They also provide concrete resources for fangyan writing that, as we saw in the

table, can be exploited graphically, phonologically, semantically and culturally, albeit to various degrees. On the other hand, the writing of Enshi fangyan words appears to involve rather mixed and heterographic practices which (as shown in Column 4) shift progressively away from the ortho-graphic writing, from being entirely or almost identical to the standard variety, to partially ortho-graphic and partially heterographic, in order to either be faithful to the phonological features of the dialect or compensate for the lack of (ortho-)graphic resources, to fully heterographic writing. In this sense, fangyan writing demonstrates substantial adaptability, creativity and improvisationality. Even if its display requires little real communicative function, the designing of its materiality involves complex and laborious semiotic processes of design.

Nevertheless, while the homeopathic dose of language demonstrates innovativity in writing fangyan, the processes evidently cause considerable inconsistency, volatility and instability on fangyan in terms of the written outcomes and their communicability, with their form, sound and meaning on the whole only partially transcribable and accessible, and therefore still largely excluded from the literary world pragmatically and culturally. This type of grassroots writing, therefore, is extremely limited in its sociolinguistic capacity in terms of generalizability and function, a pattern that is equally reflected, as we will see next, in the way these fangyan signs are positioned spatially.

2.4 The emplacement of fangyan

As mentioned earlier, Tujia Girls Town is a multilingual multi-script space where the (omni)presence of standard Chinese writing is accompanied by a small number of signs inscribed in the local dialect as well as in much more upmarket language resources from English and Korean. The obvious imbalance in quantity is indexical of the structural inequality: the fact that Enshi is a sociolinguistic margin in which the 'bigger' varieties in the sociolinguistic hierarchy, e.g. English and Korean, are scarce in availability, thus, are highly desirable and prestigious resources, while the 'smaller' varieties, such as the local dialect, have limited visibility due to their deficiency in writing and their lower status compared to the others. This unevenness is mirrored in the way these languages are spatially organized in Tujia Girls Town. I will illustrate this point by comparing Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3 is a typical example of a multilingual sign, which has the street name 'Snack Street' written in Chinese, English and Korean, in white colour against brown background. In Tujia Girls Town, English and Korean words are almost exclusively used in street signs, route maps and notices. Very few locals can read these words, or need to; they are intended for non-Chinese speaking visitors, who are however still few and far between in Enshi. The real relevance of them, then, lies in the foreign(-looking) scripts in which they are inscribed: these (non-logo)graphic images bespeak an aspiration for modernity and globality, and symbolically recontextualize and reorganize the space they are in as such, while emblematically indexing another layer of authenticity, one on a higher, more global scale.

Figure 3: A multilingual sign © Xuan Wang 2015

Figure 4: A fangyan sign © Xuan Wang 2015

More importantly, like the fangyan signs, they do so without necessarily involving the linguistic-communicative function. It is their visuality that is needed. We can see this in Figure 3 from the way the three types of scripts are laid out in the sign. The Chinese writing is emboldened, in a large font size and positioned vertically occupying an ample section in the top-left, whereas the English and the Korean writing is smaller and plain, kept in one narrow line, with English sideway up above Korean, in the lower-right of the board. The contrast in size, typeface and layout of the three languages indicates the locally (re)organized indexical order in which Chinese seems of greater significance than the 'bigger' languages, with the latter two making the sign appear more international and official. (Note also the adoption of the colour brown, an internationally conventionalized colour for tourist signage). Correspondingly, the space surrounding the sign is also organized and used in such a way — as witnessed in Figure 3: an open, clean, well-maintained and respectable space is demarcated and reserved for the sign.

By contrast, Figure 4 shows tensions in the use of space surrounding a fangyan display. Here we see the encroachment of the space around one of the signs '一哈哈儿' by the dense presence of commercial signs: the red and green banners which advertise a local fete and a cafe/household business respectively. These commercial signs are much larger, in much more vibrant colours and a much more commanding positioning (recursive at the eye level). All the fangyan signs in Tujia Girls Town were put in place as part of the original construction before it opened its door to business and tourism activities. As the space gets increasingly utilized and consumed, more and more semiotic and material objects and other human interventions enter the same space, impacting on its 'geosemiotic' order (Scollon and Scollon 2003: 19). In such a competing, polycentric environment, fangyan signs (arguably, mere emblems and decorators) are sometimes left to one side and ignored.

This competition for space comes from not only linguistic but also non-linguistic objects. In Figure 4, we see that, in addition to the somewhat aggressive commercial advertising, the sign in question is physically invaded and pushed up from below by the roof of a street market gazebo, with its view totally obstructed on one side and difficult to see on the other. The erratic, disorganized and unmannerly use of space surrounding the fangyan sign is not an unusual sight when one walks along Girls Street. It suggests the unwitting banalization of fangyan in local mundane life regardless of its potential as an index of authenticity for in local heritage tourism, thus, ultimately, placing it back to the lower end of the language (re)stratification.'

3 Conclusion

I hope that, through the above analysis of a case of fangyan writing, I have sufficiently demonstrated the 'tyranny of writing' as a highly complex and dynamic sociolinguistic process. Such processes, as we have seen, are simultaneously tied to normativity and

innovativity in relation to language and identity manoeuvring, triggered by new patterns of economic and cultural development in globalization, in which a severely stigmatized and under-resourced variety to keep its footing in a monoglot environment has been socially repositioned and semiotically revamped so as to create a sense of heritage-based authenticity. For people in Enshi, writing tourism signs in their local fangyan is particularly important given that the indigenous Tujia language has no written script and is more or less extinct. It is through rendering Enshi fangyan in writing and making it publically visible in the heritage tourism market, an identity niche that demands the commodification of the local heritage, that they get a small chance to rearticulate a hitherto suppressed ethnolinguistic authenticity, even though, as we have seen, the products are not always stable, intelligible, or meaningful to every user of the space in which they are emplaced.

Thus, what we also witness in Enshi is that most of the features of authenticity (1) need to be *created and designed*; (2) in a complex and careful calibration of multiple layers of normative constraints — global, national, regional and local. The process of inventing a scripted local language is charged with historical and contemporary sensitivities, many of which are beyond the control of the local people, and in a multilingual scenery and global template of heritage tourism with finely grained hierarchical distinctions between the languages used — Chinese, Korean, English etc. As Wilce and Fenigsen (2015: 140) confirm, '[a]uthenticities are not about being, they are about becoming', and such processes of becoming are not always spontaneous or organic. There are 'orders of authenticities' (Wang 2012: 159), the criteria of which can be overlapping, paradoxical and mutually conflicting, and the ideal point of completion which can sometimes be practically unachievable. What we have seen are attempts and unfinished processes, with outcomes that both cancel and emphasize the existing stigma of (previously unwritten) fangyan varieties.

Coulmas (2013: 104) states that '[w]ritten language is an attribute of power, writing potentially a means of empowerment.' To be more specific: written language inevitably finds itself in a *power struggle*, with highly conflicting forces pulling from every side and with inconclusive outcomes. The instruments deployed in this struggle are historically enregistered normative codes for writing, tying specific language varieties to specific forms of script, and allowing evaluative distinctions between 'standard' and 'accent'. In the case of Enshi — the rural periphery of China — local attempts at 'writing with an accent' (Hillewaert 2015) are mandatory from within a globalized script of heritage tourism, in which precisely the accent is the marketing tool that might grant Enshi a place of global prominence. The same accent, however, re-emphasizes and confirms the peripheral position of the region vis-à-vis the 'centres' in China.

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Appendix: Fangyan signs in Enshi Tujia girls town

Group 1: nouns

1) 二黄腔: a simpleton, someone who speaks nonsense
2) 细娃儿: child(ren), kid(s)
3) 高头: the above
4) 矮打杵: a shortie, a midget

Group 2: verbs

5) 失隔: to overstep the rules; to lose face
6) 合式: to suit, to fit
7) 答白: to respond
8) 打平伙: to pool resources among the group
9) 躲猫猫: to play hide and seek
10) 打董董: to go naked (in upper body)
11) 哒扑趴: to fall over
12) 对爪: to partner up with another contender in a game
13) 挨哈着: to put it aside for now, to give it more time, to delay
14) 嘎式: to start

Group 3: adjectives

15) 醒世: mature, grown up
16) 差火: disappointing, below standards
17) 火色: unhopeful; powerful, difficult to deal with
18) 日古子: unreliable, rubbish
19) 殃疲: tired, low-spirited
20) 奈逮: dirty, sloppy
21) 摩疲: slow, prolonging
22) 溜唰: quick, swift
23) 殃酸: deliberately ambiguous or unsocial; sarcastic, sour

Group 4: adverbs

24) 低噶儿: a little, a tiny bit
25) 那门: so; in that way

Group 5: idiomatic phrases

26) 搞拐哒: Oh my god!
27) 哈咯咂: Unbelievable! The son of a bitch!
28) 一哈哈儿: in a moment

CHAPTER 9

The chronotopes of authenticity: Designing the Tujia heritage in China

1 Introduction[1]

In this paper, we focus on the ethnic minority group of the Tujia in Enshi, China, a community with its minority status 'manipulated' locally and 'given' by the state (Brown 2002), as an instance of geopolitical and sociocultural periphery. We examine the ways in which this community in the periphery, described historically as 'the highlanders of Central China' (Ch'en 1992), engages with heritage tourism as a complex project of designing authenticity. We take authenticity as part of the chronotopic phenomena of identity making: becoming authentic involves the complex shaping and interplay of multiple, non-random time-space frames for discourses and semiotic performances, which condition as well as offer new potentials to the meanings of authenticity. We observe how the Tujia in Enshi are confronted with the issue of authenticity as effects of political and economic imperatives during China's modernization and globalization, notably in China's newly emerged agenda of heritage tourism.

Taking the perspective of the sociolinguistics of peripheral globalization, our study finds the Bahktinian notion of *chronotope* a useful heuristic of meaning-making (in combination with notions such as indexicality, scale, and complexity). Chronotope not only offers an empirical tool for observing the time-space configurations of semiotic and discursive behaviours for authenticity in Enshi's heritage tourism, it also enables us to adopt an ethnographically contextualized and holistic interpretation of authenticity — especially in view of the 'inauthenticity' perceived and experienced in the case of the Tujia in Enshi — understood here as multi-scaled, synchronically displayed and historically invoked processes, that are chronotopically reorganized and reordered by the peripheral group in a bigger scheme of authenticity as defined by the centre. We begin with an analytical description of data gathered from Enshi[2] to illustrate the chronotopic nature of the local production of 'authentic' Tujia heritage via tourism. This

[1] This chapter was first published as X. Wang and S. Kroon (2017). The chronotopes of authenticity: Designing the Tujia heritage in China. *AILA Review* 30: 70–93.

[2] This study is part of our ongoing ethnographic observation of Enshi as a periphery of sociolinguistic globalization, both online and offline (see e.g. Wang 2012, 2015; Wang et al. 2014 for background and details). We take ethnography as not only a procedural methodology for extracting data through fieldwork, but also an ontological, epistemological and ethical orientation

takes us to an ethnographic account of China's nation-building and state politics of multiculturalism, which uncovers, in relation to this, and behind a seemingly unproblematic scene of authenticity in heritage tourism, the anxiety of inauthenticity experienced by the Tujia in Enshi with their own minority status and cultural heritage, as well as their chronotopic incorporation of both 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' aspects of local identity practices into a new order of authenticity from within the existing normative parameters. What emerges from such practices, we argue, is a new cultural identification, embracing not only an economic but also identity opportunity in which the orthodoxy of authenticity is becoming internalized and strategically manoeuvred into the local narrative and semiotic representation of heritage and authentic self. In this sense, the Tujia in Enshi chronotopically may be shifting away from the periphery towards a new and reconfigured centre of meaning-making.

In what follows, we first locate our case within sociolinguistic research on heritage tourism and peripheral globalization. We then discuss the concept of chronotope and its heuristic purchase for understanding authenticity as identity practices; we consider this mainly in relation to heritage and tourism. Based on these frameworks, we empirically illustrate the chronotopic processes of semiotic production of authenticity by analysing, first, one major heritage tourism event we encountered in Enshi, and, following this, the ethnographic history of the Tujia in Enshi in which the issue of heritage authenticity is situated, and the chronotopic reordering of authenticity by the Tujia that incorporates the logic of authenticity defined by the centres (the globalized heritage tourism and the state identity politics) into the local way of life. In the final part, we offer a critique of chronotope, authenticity and globalization in the periphery.

2 Mapping out heritage tourism in peripheral globalization

19 August 2013 was no ordinary day for Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, a rural minority region located in the deep mountains of Hubei Province in Central China. It was the day that marked the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of Enshi, the last officially recognized ethnic minority prefecture (of the Tujia, the Miao and twenty-six other smaller groups) in the People's Republic of China. For the local communities, this day was not only a reminder of the historic moment when an entirely different and significant political-cultural identity, of *minority*, was given to them by the state. It was also a formal occasion to showcase and celebrate the *particular(ized) cultural heritage* they have assumed since that moment, to perform and re-enact that

that offers in-depth, realistic and critical understandings of cultural and communication phenomena (Fabian 1983; Hymes 1996). The specific data on heritage tourism in Enshi presented here were collected by Xuan Wang in the summer 2013, during one of the repeated fieldwork conducted in that region.

heritage in a present-day context, and to marketize aspects of *authenticity* in relation to their identity and heritage — whether prescribed or ascribed — in order to set their foot in the new economy of heritage tourism and become part of the globalization processes in China.[3] In the fortnight leading up to the special day, dozens of major events and activities were organized in various parts of Enshi (of which one will be analysed in detail later), combining commemoration, showcasing, celebration, performing, re-enactment and marketization, with the Tujia, the largest indigenous ethnic group of the prefecture, playing the leading role.

What is witnessed is a remarkable instance of sociolinguistic globalization in the periphery (Wang et al. 2014; see also Heller 2003, 2010; Blommaert 2008, 2010; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013; Pietikäinen et al. 2016). In the periphery — being geopolitical and sociocultural minority in the case of Enshi — just as in the 'centre', unprecedented economic and cultural transformations as well as renewed local awareness and identity politics are to various extents taking place. For the people of Enshi, similar to disenfranchised ethnic and small-culture groups elsewhere, heritage tourism provides niched albeit crucial access to and infrastructure of globalization through which opportunities for economic and identity repositioning become available and explored. Such dynamics are sociolinguistically densely substantiated in key moments such as the founding anniversary of Enshi. What we will observe in moments like this, also as the central argument we would like to bring from this study, is that it is through multiple chronotopic organizations of semiotic and discursive manoeuvring, that peripheral groups arrive at a sense of authenticity that fulfils heritage tourism as both an economic and identity project instated by globalization.

The case of Enshi focuses our gaze on specific aspects of peripherality, notably *heritage*, a notion intrinsic to ethnic and cultural identity and at the core of the local globalization processes, lodged in the new economy of heritage (thus identity) tourism. As suggested by Pujolar (2013: 56), 'heritage is indexical of peripherality within the framework of modernity', and it is through the reproduction of the modernist ideology and discourse of antiquarianism and linguistic nationalism (as described in Bauman and Briggs 2003) that particular forms of the past and ways of life — i.e. history and tradition — are evoked, 'invented' (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983) and projected onto specific spaces and people, creating 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991) such as the nation-state and distinct ethnocultural groups. Thus, heritage, with its particular(ized) cultural and identity forms and meanings, is a product of modernity, a self-fulfilling

[3] Heritage tourism became an opportunity for Enshi very recently. It emerged in the 1980s, after China's economic reform of 1979 and Enshi's recognition as an ethnic minority region in 1983. In 2000, when Enshi was absorbed into the national Great Western Development Plan, heritage tourism was adopted officially as a development strategy at the levels of the local, provincial and central government, with 'strengthening the cultural foundations' and 'combining *minzu* culture and tourism' represented by the Tujia being the top of its agenda (Wang 2015).

project in which *modernity* is articulated through constructing *tradition* as its (perceived) defining complement and contrasting Other, and 'the root pair can be elaborated into a whole lexicon of dichotomous adjectives: ancient and modern, indigenous and cosmopolitan, hidden and transparent, mysterious and known, obscure and legible, pure and impure, substantial and ephemeral, and most of all authentic and inauthentic' (Upton 2001: 298–299). In this sense, heritage encompasses multiple intersecting (e.g. geographical, economic, political, and social) dimensions of peripherality.

Perhaps it is in modern nation-building that the 'ethno' layer of making heritage through the counterpart Other finds its most poignant expression. There, heritage is deployed as an instrument for the conceiving of nationhood and national identity, in which groups of ethnocultural minorities are created — often from the perspective of the majority groups and set off against them, representing the alterity while also being an indispensable part of a (supposedly) shared memory and history — so as to rationalize and legitimatize the hegemony of the majorities and to promote the nationalist course of unity, cohesion and homogeneity from within. The effect of such processes is not only the invention of ethnicities, what Roosens (1989) terms 'ethnogenesis', but, necessarily, the minorization and marginalization of these groups on the basis of their geography, economic power, cultural pattern, language, etc., enunciated in set descriptors such as the 'remote, local, agrarian, primordial, outdated, and subordinate', which are in turn circulated as historical truths.

The way in which ethnocultural heritage works as a political instrument and (controlled) knowledge basis of ethnotaxonomy for forging and maintaining nation-states and multicultural societies manifests itself in various geopolitical contexts.[4] China is a case in point, wherein the state ideology and discourse of a 'unified, multinational country' has resulted in the official classification of fifty-six ethnic nationalities (with the Han being the majority and constituting more than ninety percent of the Chinese population) shortly after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 (Mullaney 2012). This self-imagined diversity is managed through the duality of political regulation and acculturation of the 'barbaric' minorities by the 'advanced' Han majority (Ma 2016), and state-sponsored multiculturalism is such that the ethnocultural identity and diversity are routinely represented in the juxtaposition of fifty-six equal but — with the exception of the Han — uniquely and exotically dressed individuals (Wang 2015). Together, in their ethicised and semiotized physical appearances, these individuals symbolize and embody *at once* the fifty-six different ethnic groups *and* one harmonious whole. Such an image arguably belongs to the kind of compartmentalized multiculturalism in which particular(ized) clothing (and body) becomes the essential(ised) emblematic token of ethnocultural diversity and heritage. It resonates with Gladney's

[4] Povinelli (2002) offers a cogent example in what she terms 'the cunning of recognition' in the context of Australia, where the indigenous groups have to prove their 'aboriginality' based on non-indigenous knowledge, discourse and systems of recognition that serve to reinforce liberal regimes of nationalism and multiculturalism.

(1994; see also Blum 2001) exposition of the construction of subaltern subjects and peripheral citizens by virtue of the exoticization of the minorities in China's ethnicity politics. Hence, heritage in Chinese multiculturalism, comparable to scenes elsewhere, is a politically loaded construct that seeks out the (exotic, dissembling, visible) minority from the (normative, invisible) majority from within the nation, in order to sustain and authenticate its core political economy. Its logic of using cultural items, be it clothing, language, or something else, to mark out social positions and differences, closely resembles Bourdieu's (1984) notion of 'distinction' thus is fraught with hegemony, inequality and peripherality.

In the context of globalization, the need for articulating and promoting heritage seems heightened. On the one hand, the deterritorialization, displacement and cultural disjunctures and differences (Appadurai 1996) have made it all the more important to rediscover and re-establish local attachment and identity through the preservation and rejuvenation of history and heritage, both tangible and intangible. On the other hand, the emergence of heritage tourism as part of the globalized new economy has created niche markets for the production and consumption of heritage (and its associated artefacts and experiences). As demonstrated by Heller (e.g. 2003, 2010, 2014), the rise of the new economy in late capitalism rests largely on the commodification of the periphery and the transaction of the added value of symbolic distinctions between the periphery and the centre, typified in the form of identity tourism. Driven by this new economic pattern, heritage tourism becomes a primary stage on which discourses, images and objects of such centre-periphery distinctions — framed as heritage — are produced, performed, circulated and consumed. This form of globalization is crucial for the disenfranchised ethnic and small-culture groups, which explains the surge in heritage-based tourism activities in the ethnocultural peripheries of China.

Our discussion so far underscores the conceptualization of heritage in relation to the conditions of modernity and globalization, revealing the systemic peripherality heritage indexes and the globalized economic, political and cultural motifs in which it operates. In so doing, what we are actually problematizing, is the underlying issue of 'authenticity'. Given that authenticity is pivotal to both *heritage as identity making* and *heritage as tourism commodification*, we have to address the extent to which the heritage (tourism) project, such as that of Enshi, engages with the global and local regimes of meaning making and enables for itself a tenable position in both the tourism market and the cultural politics of recognition. In other words, we need to examine how the Tujia in Enshi may, through heritage tourism as a new opportunity, be considered authentic simultaneously in relation to existing state multiculturalism, the new tourist market and the place itself: authenticity as a polycentric challenge.

3 Framing heritage authenticity and chronotopic identities

The way authenticity is sociolinguistically materialized, indexed, negotiated and performed has been examined in the works of Coupland (2003, 2010, 2014) and others (e.g. Pennycook 2007; Blommaert and Varis 2013; Wilce and Fenigsen 2014; Lacoste, Leimgruber and Breyer 2014). We take the converging arguments in these works as follows (see Coupland 2014 for an overview): 1) authenticity is always expressed through the deployment of linguistic, discursive and/or semiotic resources; 2) in globalization, meanings of authenticity are increasingly embedded in both local and translocal frames of reference; 3) authenticity is better understood as the effect of 'authentication', that is, the tensions and dynamics between normative constraints and agentive production — with the goal to establish and reach a benchmark of (often multilayered) 'enoughness'; 4) the emphasis on de-essentializing authenticity and on its performative dimension points us towards new potentials of interpreting (seemingly 'inauthentic') cultural and identity behaviours.

Following on, we draw attention to the mechanisms of authenticity in heritage tourism and peripheral globalization. As said, heritage emerges as a modernist construct, with its normative parameters — 'orders of authenticity' (Wang 2012) — centring on geopolitical and sociocultural peripherality and serving to sustain the political economy of the nation-state. In Chinese multiculturalism, this can be seen in the essentialised othering through exoticitization of ethnocultural heritage, largely based on the state-prescribed ethnotaxonomy from the perspective of the Han majority. Heritage tourism capitalizes on exactly the kind of asymmetrical distinction created by dichotomizing the majority versus the minority, the advanced versus the barbaric, the urban versus the rural, the modern versus the traditional, the global versus the local, etc. Its core business is both the semiotization and the commodification of authenticity (Jaworski and Pritchard 2005), which, on the part of the periphery-supplier, involves selecting *specific* cultural resources and communicating them in highly *specific* ways for *specific* audiences on *specific* occasions. Such processes, necessarily 'inauthentic' due to modification and commodification, generate alternative revenues of 'inauthentic authenticity' (Wang 2015). As Heller (2014: 154) asserts, in understanding authenticity in the periphery, '[c]ommodification affords us a window into ongoing change, allowing us to link up individual subjectivity, interactional processes, and the conditions of the symbolic market.'

How, then, can we study the actual forms taken by this sociolinguistic process of commodification, caught in the polycentric challenge of authenticity described earlier? How can we, in answering this question, also account for the inevitable 'inauthenticity' connoted in the act of commodification (and associated performativity), and the way the paradoxical inauthentic authenticity is organized as a sustainable and coherent part into a shared lifeworld? Here, Bakhtin's seminal idea of 'chronotope' and its recent sociolinguistic uptakes (e.g. Agha 2007; Lampert and Perrino 2007; Woolard 2013; Blommaert and De Fina 2017) offer a great source of inspiration.

In Bakhtin's literary analysis, chronotope was used for addressing 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed' in novels (Bakhtin 1981: 84), namely, the *time-space specificity* from which discourse of plot, history and identity emerges. For Bakhtin, *time and space* are inseparable in constructing narratives and characters; they function as a fused, concrete whole — identifiable as chronotope — which is structured and encoded in specific ways, generating historical and semiotic conditions of meaning making. This conceptualization makes it possible to dissect and describe the multiple time-space configurations that co-occur, not only in literary (en)textuality, in terms of *novelistic* chronotopes through which readers can extract and connect multiple social meanings and agencies represented in a story, but more generally, as *cultural* chronotopes: 'depiction of place-time-and-personhood to which social interactants orient when they engage each other through discursive signs of any kind' (Agha 2007: 320).

This cultural potential of chronotopes is formulated as 'invokable histories' in Blommaert's (2015: 110) attempt to bring together the notion of chronotope and of context and scale for addressing the complexity of language in society. Drawing on the central argument of discourse *in* history, Blommaert considers chronotope as an important aspect of *contextualization* in which 'meaning as value effects [is] derived from local enactments of historically loaded semiotic resources' (2015: 108; see also Gumperz 2003). From this perspective, all interactive events can be seen as chronotopically organized: situated in time-space, occurring as here-and-now while indexing a myriad of 'historically configured and ordered tropes' (Blommaert 2015: 111). These tropes, or culturally recognizable systems of meanings and values, are applied and made understandable through *genres*, by means of ideologized, normative and enregistered features and styles that index and codify specific time-space relations. Each chronotope installs its own discursive frames and orders of indexicality (and of authenticity). Each invocation of time-space also constitutes ascription of specific genres, registers, indexicals and other chronotopically relevant norms, and, as such, enactment of specific intentions, behaviours and effects.

Building on this interpretation, chronotope can be fruitfully combined with *scale*, another time-space metaphor that illustrates social stratification (Blommaert 2007, 2010; Collins, Slembrouck and Baynham 2009), i.e. the ways in which language resources are unevenly distributed, and acts of communication are unequally materialized and evaluated against normative complexes and orders of indexicality, with hierarchically attributed meanings and values. Through the notion of scale, argues Blommaert (2015: 111), we are able to critically examine the chronotopic organizations of language resources in terms of 'the degrees of availability and accessibility of adequate contexts creatively invoked in discourse' as well as 'the scalar effects of recognizability'. Scale points us towards 'the scope of understandability [… and] scope of creativity' (Blommaert 2015: 111) of the discursive enactment of time-space, and, we may add, the interrelations of co-occurring chronotopes within that enactment (for instance, distinguished by Bakhtin as 'major' and 'minor') that keep different orders of

authenticity in balance. The issues at stake in chronotopes, thus, are about distinctions in power, authority, agency and voice — issues that are part and parcel of the sociolinguistic critique on language and inequalities in the works of Bourdieu (1991), Hymes (1996) and others.

Blommaert's intervention on chronotope by connecting it with the notions of context and scale, is aimed at a less reductive approach to the complexity presented in 'the total linguistic fact' (Silverstein 1985), a challenge faced by sociolinguistics on how to account for

> a complex construction of multiple historicities compressed into one synchronized act of performance, projecting different forms of factuality and truth, all of them ideologically configured and thus indexically deployed and all of them determined by the concrete sociolinguistic conditions of their production and uptake, endowing them with a scaled communicability at each moment of enactment. (Blommaert 2015: 113–114)

To this end, it may well be feasible to suggest that all communicative behaviours can be examined as chronotopically organized cultural practices in which the time-space configurations reveal not only the nano-politics of identity at the personal level, but also more far-reaching sociocultural changes in cultural globalization (Blommaert and De Fina 2017). Reflecting on this potential, we are reminded of Agha's (2007) argument for the scope of generalizability by defining chronotope as 'a semiotic representation of time and space *peopled* by certain social types' (2007: 321, our emphasis). The agentive dimension of chronotope is made translucent, as Agha (2007: 321) states further: 'The act of producing or construing a chronotopic representation itself has a chronotopic organization (of time, space and personhood) which may be transformed by that act.' The capacity to actualize recognizable meaning, personhood and social reality through chronotope points to its performative dimension — by orienting toward multiple, polycentric time-space frames and scaled normativities specified therein (Baynham 2015). Such time-space orientations are essentially acts of identity and realizations of 'recombinant selves' (Agha 2007: 324), which in return may generate new meanings and changes, thus, pushing the boundaries of authenticity.

Relating the above understanding to our earlier discussions on heritage and authenticity, we see that the concept of chronotope has much to offer to heritage tourism and identity construction in peripheral globalization at both descriptive and analytical levels. Heritage itself is a chronotopic notion, located in a particular(ized) image of an eternalized past, attached to a certain place and group. The use of the term activates a whole package of associated frames and ways of thinking, talking, signing, dressing and behaving. In globalization, the chronotope of heritage, with its orders of authenticity centring on peripherality, maps onto that of the global centre-periphery distinction amplified by late capitalism; while it also merges with the chronotope of tourism driven by the commodification of authenticity. All these are organized into the chronotope of locality: Enshi as a geopolitical and sociocultural periphery in China.

Within this is nested yet another chronotope, that of the state multiculturalism in China emerged from its nation-building process, in which the Tujia as yet another chronotope is situated. The (multi-)chronotopic nature of our object of study is prominent and consequential. But, how are these different chronotopes semiotically combined and materialized? How might the 'invokable histories' be configured into a 'recombinant' new act of self? To what extent is the chronotopic organization understood as 'authentic', and to whom? Let us now bring these questions into the empirical field of observation by returning to the scene, or chronotopic setting, that we have opened in the beginning.

4 Dissecting chronotopes of authenticity

That chronotopic setting is 19 August 2013, Enshi. The thirtieth anniversary of Enshi as the last officially recognized minority prefecture in China punctuates a crucial and sociolinguistically dense moment of identity making. It serves as a memorial of the local ethnic minority status given by the state. It opens a stage for performing and reiterating the heritage assumed by that status for the local people. It also inserts a need to promote the local heritage tourism. To put in the terms developed above, this setting is constituted into a combination of chronotopes that are called into play on a locally contrived occasion. We will now home in on the complex details and dynamics in the chronotopic configuration of the setting through a sustained look at one example.

4.1 Chronotopic organization in heritage performance

The example is one of the many events and activities organized locally in different parts of Enshi during the fortnight preceding the actual anniversary day. Our ethnographic attention, access and selection of data here are necessarily reflexively shaped by our personal and subjective encounter and experience in the field, be it sometimes 'incidental' (Pinsky 2015). In this case, this led us (through local acquaintances) to the small village of Shuitian Ba, on 17 August 2013, two days before the official festival date. Shuitian Ba village was, until that moment, a remote and little known hamlet in Xuan'en, the poorest county in Enshi. On that day, however, this peripheral village was turned into the centre of an open-air culture festival. Several heritage-related activities were taking place from dawn to dusk, including an outdoor stage performance of ethnic art, a national mountain bike tournament, and the opening of a local Tujia folk museum, attracting thousands of participants and visitors from near and far (such as Europe). A précis of the event and its multiplex time-space composition is captured in the following image (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: A chronotopic organization of 'authentic' Tujia in Enshi © Xuan Wang 2013

What we see is part of the outdoor stage performance in the heart of the village. Two major chronotopic units are readily identifiable: one of the stage, and one of the village surroundings in which the stage is set. Each unit entails several more chronotopes that are brought in and materialized semiotically, driven by a certain ideology of heritage authenticity.

We turn first to the stage as a chronotopic unit, focusing on the semiotic framing in the stage background design. While being a chronotopic semiotization in itself, the stage background design also defines the overall chronotope of the event by announcing its thematic title in red characters: *Prefectural Day Celebration — Walk into A Thousand Tujia Households*. Underneath in yellow colour and smaller size, are the four subthematic titles: 1) A Thousand Tujia Households country leisure and tourism opening ceremony; 2) the first national mountain bike invitation tournament; 3) intangible cultural heritage show; 4) A Thousand Tujia Households Ecological Beauty photography competition. These are followed by a signature of time and space — Xuan'en, Hubei, 19 August 2013 — and completed with names of the main organizers, participant groups, and sponsors.

The core message delivered here is about *Prefectural Day Celebration*, the official anniversary of the local minority status received from the state. This is converted and

combined into the new agenda engendered by and in turn reinforcing that status: heritage tourism, developed locally as the project of *A Thousand Tujia Households* (more about this project below). The expression 'walk into' is a public invitation, paraphrasing 'welcome' and indexing a tourism marketing discourse. The centrality of this double message, of the locally implemented but state-directed political, economic and cultural priority, is indexed in the (red) colour and (large) size of the writing, even in its font: with the thematic title mostly written in the font *Fang Zheng* (literally 'clear and square'), a print font with a serious and meticulous appearance indicating formality, only leaving out the name of the local project, *A Thousand Tujia Households,* which adopts a calligraphy font, a more flowy handwriting style that sets the name off against the rest of the line, perhaps to imply a degree of possibility for manoeuvring and creativity.

Several sub chronotopes can be also observed, pointing to distinct yet interrelated elements of the heritage tourism project implemented in Shuitian Ba and opening for interpretation and consumption on the day. These elements correspond with the subthematic titles mentioned above, and chronotopically reorganize the place as a destination 1) of rural tourism, represented in its ethicised primordial, idyllic lifestyle; 2) of extreme tourism, explorable as a remote and dangerous place through the modern adventure sport of mountain biking; 3) of cultural tourism, inhabited by the ethnic Other, crystallized and exhibited in certain (intangible) forms of tradition; and 4) of ecotourism, as a space undisturbed by modern living, with uncontaminated natural beauty. Taken together, these strands index and put into practice the logic of heritage tourism and its tropes (multi-layered and revolving around peripherality), co-constructing an 'authentic' local through the commodification of its profound peripherality.

The intertwining of these chronotopes sanctions and 'orders' the deployment of more semiotic indexicals into that same stage background design, in the form of a collage of different images on which all the aforementioned thematic titles are inscribed. In this collage, Shuitian Ba village is seen lying peacefully in the gentle cradle of beautiful mountains (which until recently were iconic of Enshi's remoteness and poverty). The centre of the panoramic view is occupied by a stretch of lushly green tea fields (tea has been a well-known produce of Xuan'en for two centuries). On both sides of the fields, along the foot of the mountains, sit small, tidy clusters of 'traditional' farm houses (which were in fact newly built under the local A Thousand Tujia Households project). In the bottom right corner of the collage, we also find a superimposed image of professional-looking road cyclists in action (an image associated with modern sports originated from Western Europe). Undoubtedly, these images are carefully selected and chronotopically reorganized into the stage background design. The aesthetic depiction of the village echoes and complements the (rural, adventure, cultural, and eco-) forms of heritage tourism inscribed in the thematic titles listed above. They also reaffirm ideologically the local multiple orientations to the translocal (heritage) authenticity simultaneously invoked in these titles – we are observing what Blommaert

(2005: 126) called 'layered simultaneity' here. Shuitian Ba village is authentic, as it seems, because of the confluence of all of these elements in that historical-synchronic moment of enactment and observation. The chronotopically invoked words, images and ideas of *heritage-as-tourism*, as evidenced so far, all point to authenticity as a romanticized, exoticized and commodified version of peripherality. This version of peripherality, as we will see next, is embedded in and mobilized in support of the overall heritage project of Enshi: the construction of an authentic minority identity of the Tujia.

Let us now look at the second aspect of the stage, the actual show unfolding within that chronotope. What is being performed is a dramatized dance called Ten Sisters, which re-enacts the Tujia tradition of 'wedding lament'. This performance is yet another chronotopic organization, richly semiotized through music, singing, costumes, body movements and storytelling. We see that all dancers are dressed in supposedly Tujia-style costumes (the 'authentic' Tujia costumes are hard to identify, see Wang 2015). The bride and the groom are wearing matching red. With head covered under a red veil, the bride is being carried away by the groom on his back. The bridesmaids, the other nine of the ten sisters, are in identical pink dresses. They line up behind the couple, crying and waving farewell to the bride with red handkerchiefs. One of them seems to find it difficult to see off the bride: she stands by the couple, holding a red umbrella over the bride to shelter her from the sun. The music is sad and grieving, and the lyrics speak about the bride's reluctance to leave home and her gratitude to her parents.

The 'invokable histories' of this chronotopic organization, taking the form of dance show, are indexical of China's state ideology of multiculturalism and its imperative perception and representation of ethnic minorities. As discussed earlier, this ideology derives from an ethnotaxonomy, claiming certain (sometimes imagined or caricatured) aspects of the past or distinctions as traditions and ethnically 'unique' heritage, and circulating these as knowledge and truth that transcend time-space. This order of authenticity overarches the heritage making in Enshi. Although the wedding lament is a dated custom once practiced in many Han and other ethnic communities in China (and elsewhere), it has been officially attached to the Tujia and assumed as part of the group's timeless, unique feature and cultural heritage. The ritual is re-enacted and chronotopically incorporated into various identity moments to indicate authenticity, such as here on the stage in Shuitian Ba village for the thirtieth anniversary of Enshi. In fact, wedding lament has become a Tujia 'classic'; the ritual — or, rather, the idea of it — has been enregistered as part of the local identity repertoire even though the vast majority in Enshi have not even seen it in its 'authentic' form themselves.

The dance performance of Ten Sisters in Shuitian Ba is one of the numerous reinterpretations of the Tujia wedding lament ritual. Within its own time-space frame as a dance, it artistically and intertextually recycles the official discourse of the 'authentic' Tujia. Meanwhile, the dance serves as a focal point of the chronotope generated on the stage: it ties in with the theme 'intangible cultural heritage show' written in the

stage background design; it delivers that theme through selected multimodal semiosis and, via the stage, opens its semiotization of authenticity to multiple audiences and interpretations. The dancers on this stage are what we might call the 'heritagized' body. By being members of the local communities, wearing the Tujia-style clothing, and doing the ritual of wedding lament through dancing, the dancers themselves have become the most 'authentic' embodiment of Tujia authenticity. The bodies *per se* and what they can do and represent, in this sense, are called upon as an elemental form of chronotopic resource for achieving that authenticity, thus, an elemental part of the Tujia heritage. This insertion of the 'heritagized' body onto the stage is the semiotic axis to all the chronotopic work, i.e. *heritage-as-ethnicity*, unfolding in that moment of celebration in Shuitian Ba.

This brings us to the village as a chronotopic unit in which the celebration event takes place. We see the mountains iconic of Shuitian Ba being a central part of this chronotope. They frame the stage celebration as both the natural landscape of the village and the stage background design. This creates an authenticating effect to what is happening on the stage and, by extension, to the Tujia heritage projected from that stage. The same can be said about the corporeal and semiotic juxtaposition of the tea fields, the traditional farmhouses and the cyclists. The village provides the locality and a foundational time-space framework. However, locality is not merely the backdrop outside of things that are happening, it is also designed and brought in as an key chronotopic resource.

A Thousand Tujia Households is a local heritage project that has turned Shuitian Ba village into the ideal(ized) locality for the celebration. The project, funded by the county government of Xuan'en, was to make a model village out of Shuitian Ba showcasing the natural beauty of the mountainous region, the idyllic agrarian lifestyle, and the unique Tujia way of life, focusing on housing — all in all, an 'authentic' package of heritage features under the umbrella term of Tujia, which feeds directly into the heritage tourism market and its commodification of Tujia authenticity. We have seen all of these semiotically represented on the stage. Not as immediately visible in that synchronicity, is the process of (chronotopic) design of the village. To achieve the goal, the village has been transformed. The previous paddy fields (origin of the village name) were replaced with tea fields, concentrated in the primary location of village centre. New roads and paths were built, featuring a Dong[5]-style footbridge over the brook running through the village. The location and size of the local farmhouses were also reorganized so that they would look tidier and more uniformly recognizable. More interestingly, a proportion of the project funding was spent on revamping these houses to give them an ethnically 'authentic' appearance. This involved replastering the external walls of many houses to hide their originally tiled facades (the latter was an urban trend in Enshi at the time), replacing the aluminium window frames with carved wooden ones, and adding artistic features to the roofs and eaves of the houses. All

[5] Another ethnic minority group found in Enshi.

these efforts have contributed to the 'authentic' locality and are visually connected to other 'authentic' products and performances found in the village.

One may ask whether the production of locality here have paradoxically triggered 'artificial authenticity', therefore, inauthenticity. However, what counts as the original? Is the original the authentic? At what point does an intentional adjustment turn its object into something inauthentic? Answers to such questions are contentious and complex. We prefer to consider the A Thousand Tujia Households project as an example in which the semiotic modification of a chronotopic setting is part of the wider process of striving for a sense of authenticity at different scale-levels; it therefore belongs to the production of authenticity.

To summarize, the example from Shuitian Ba village illustrates complex chronotopic organizations of different aspects of the Tujia heritage in action. In the format of a stage performance, different time-space frames are mobilized to represent the 'authentic' Tujia for political and economic purposes. The stage and the village become multi-chronotopic, in the sense that they generate a nexus of chronotopes, with the Tujia dance performance being the focal point, and the stage background design semiotically mirroring the corporeal surroundings and activities of the occasion. Each chronotope brings along its own historical meanings, with different configurations and meanings merging into a fused whole through the stage setting on which the Tujia heritage is performed — in a double sense of the word: as a theatrical performance, and as an agentive process of semiotization. This performative aspect, as we have seen, involves notable efforts of 'semiotic design' (Wang 2015). Chronotopes examined here are necessarily part of the larger chronotopes of heritage in Enshi, in China and in globalization. They show that the performance of heritage authenticity, or any identity claim, is organized in relation to multiple time-space frames of meaning making.

4.2 Chronotopic scaling and authenticity

We have suggested earlier that scale is a notion that can describe the scope of communicability of chronotopically organized and semiotized behaviours (Blommaert 2015). If heritage can be observed as such a phenomenon, following our discussion so far, tourism offers a scale at which heritage can be articulated, negotiated and understood. The scale of tourism mobilizes specific norms, genres and expectations toward which communication on heritage and authenticity orients — we have seen these in the case of Enshi being 'translated' into the globalized formats of rural, adventure, ethnic, and eco-tourism and respective spatiotemporal configuration of local engagements. There are other scales that are prevalent, such as the state ethnopolitics of multiculturalism, or the local histories and conditions. All these scales inform and shape the way heritage can be performed and developed in an 'authentic' way. This suggests that heritage is a profoundly multi-scalar and polycentric process, in which different scales interact with one another, but not on equal footings. They may come

into play at a semiotic, ideological or discursive level. They may work in parallel, conjoint, competing or conflicting relations with one another, and in turn involve different contributors and evaluators. The outcome is heteroglossic, a package of multiple meanings and voices. Thus, such dynamics and the opportunities, tensions and transactions they instigate qualify 'heritage' as a verb (to echo Street 1993).

From this perspective, heritage can be understood as a scaled collective process of meaning making in a given time-space. 'Heritaging', we might say, is a matter of scaling: manoeuvring with the dialectic interplays of the relevant scales to arrive at a sense of authenticity through chronotopically organized 'synchronized' activities. This understanding may go some way to explaining our remaining questions on the issue of heritage authenticity we have encountered in Enshi, an issue that appears to be largely about responding to the orders of authenticity at the scale of globalized heritage tourism and that of state heritage politics. Through the example illustrated above, we have gained insight into the intricate chronotopic organizations of heritage authenticity, and understood that it is within a complex regime of normativities that a range of chronotopes are brought together to explore an important identity opportunity for Enshi. The questions we are left with are: In what way can we actually interpret the local uptake of heritage tourism under these conditions still as an agentive process of heritaging and, in the end, self-realized authenticity for the community itself? In what way can we keep a balanced view between the conformative and the performative, the staged and the everyday, the authentic and the inauthentic, in order to better account for meaning making in the periphery? To answer these questions we have to start somewhere else, with the genesis of Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture.

The establishment of Enshi's minority status through its ethnic population of the Tujia was a convoluted story. In the process of nation building after 1949, the Chinese government implemented ethnic classification in order to give recognition to minority groups and to integrate them into a 'unified, multinational country'. A large number of the fifty-five minority groups we now know in China were officially identified in the 1950s. Each ethnic group, called *minzu*, (supposedly) has its own territory, common history, unique language, culture and tradition. However, as Mullaney (2011) shows in his account of this part of Chinese history, the ethnotaxonomy applied at the time had its epistemological, ontological and methodological foundations in Western modernist social scientific beliefs in disciplines such as linguistics and ethnology (and, we could add, its political conversion into a 'model state', the Soviet Union). It was unable to clearly define all ethnic groups according to pre-assumed, fixed categories such as language or specific cultural traits. The Tujia group was not recognized until 1957 because the group had been mixing and living together with other groups; they lacked the obvious cultural features that would make them visibly different from the other groups. Its classification was prompted accidentally when a representative of the Miao from a town bordering Hunan and Hubei provinces pleaded with the central government to

'reclassify' her and her people in Hunan as the Tujia, since their language differed from that of the Miao (Tan and Hu 2009).

However, whereas areas in Western Hunan were officially recognized in 1957 as Tujia territories, based on the local communities' self-identification and fieldwork conducted by Chinese ethnologists, their neighbours in Enshi, Western Hubei, did not receive the same recognition. The ethnic classification was soon brought to a halt with the change of political climate in China prefiguring the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, when claiming any different identity risked being seen as counter-revolutionary factionism. It was not until after the Cultural Revolution that the ethnic classification was resumed, to address some of the issues left over from two decades ago. Enshi's case reopened.

Brown (2002) records that when the status reclassification and restoration of the Tujia started in Enshi in early 1980s, many local people were unwilling to 'become' Tujia since they 'did not have Tujia consciousness' (2002: 375) and preferred to consider themselves Han. Brown argues that the categories of ethnic boundary and distinction created by the local government — mainly by genealogical information and history of residence — did not reflect the actual cultural practice and sociopolitical experience of the individuals; it was a 'manipulation' of population statistics based on an artificial dichotomy between the Tujia and the Han, a tactic of authentication by the local government that was 'both economically beneficial and politically safe' for the local populace as a whole (Brown 2002: 389). The disjunction between the state recognition and the local sense of self observed here illustrates the sensitivity and power dynamics of authenticity in relation to ethnic identity in China — particularly so for Enshi — in which the influence of the state prevails.

In the light of this historical trajectory, we may understand that for Enshi, what heritaging initially invokes is perhaps an uncomfortable sense of inauthenticity rather than authenticity and, consequently, anxiety about how to *become* authentic. This question is hardly meaningful in terms of daily life at the local scale, since being a Tujia, a Miao or else was an abstract political status largely detached from the local personal realities in which nearly all the features and evidence of 'authenticity', such as ethnic language, clothing and customs, are absent, including people's own ethnic consciousness. The question until recently has only been relevant and important at the national scale: how to *be seen as authentic* in the eyes of the state, of the majorities and of the other minorities. The chronotopes of the local group identity were separated and confined in two disjointed scales of meaning making in terms of heritage. When called upon by the state as minority, people shift into a 'heritage' mode or chronotope of communication, deploying 'authentic' heritage-related semiotic resources. The moment this duty is done, they shift out of it, picking up a different, 'inauthentic' set of resources to continue with life at the local level. The contrast and disjunction and the essentialising accusation of inauthenticity these often produce only accentuate the peripheral status of Enshi.

This predicament, however, is now brought in a different light, with globalization and heritage tourism opening up new economic, political and cultural opportunities for Enshi. Tourism began to take shape in Enshi in the late 1980s, after its reintegration and recognition as a minority region, but only came into full swing less than a decade ago. The old question of 'how to play the *minzu* [ethnic minority] card' began to merge with the new economic demand, leading to the local strategizing of heritage tourism, with the Tujia (now the largest minority group of Enshi) being positioned as its spearhead. The entrée of a new heritage discourse from the global scale begins to reshape the meaning of authenticity in Enshi. Its natural scenery of steep mountains and local culture have been politically reframed and economically repackaged, turning from an image of wilderness and underdevelopment into one of rare beauty, ecological privilege, nostalgic leisure and bucolic life. This indicates a symbolic shift in the order of authenticity that has historically stigmatized Enshi.

The global template of heritage tourism simultaneously authenticates and de-authenticates heritage. On the one hand, it seeks the 'real' local in order to commodify it; on the other hand, it disrupts and 'contaminates' the local way of life through translocal encounters and involvements – tourists are by definition not local, 'not from here'. This creates scaled chronotopic patterns that reorganize heritage into the (authentic) 'timeless-here' in mixture and coordination with the (inauthentic) commodification and rescrambling of time-space and resources, as we have seen in the example of Shuitian Ba in Enshi. There, it seems, the new order of authenticity at the global scale-level offers scope and chronotopic opportunities to simultaneously articulate heritage authenticity at the national and the local scale-levels: people can fit their previously disjointed 'on' and 'off' modes of heritage within the one chronotope of heritage tourism. By moving up and mixing scales, they manage to obtain a degree of coherence and sustainability in their dilemma of inauthentic authenticity – heritage is now chronotopically niched.

More important to our understanding about Enshi is the emerging agency involved in this reorganization. The absorption into globalization processes through heritage tourism is subtly transforming the identity making processes for Enshi. The opportunities put forward to the local communities have enabled them to engage with their 'given' heritage and the question of 'how to become authentic' in a more autonomously active way. This is evidenced in Enshi's full orientation toward tourism as a heritage strategy and the political and economic investments it makes accordingly. It is also evidenced in the local commitment to identity opportunities like the one we discussed, through the detailed, layered semiotic manoeuvres so as to better perform Tujia authenticity; and it is evidenced in the scaling of heritage practices accumulated from such opportunities toward authenticity of optimal potential of recognizability. The efforts are about appropriating these opportunities, as much as about developing an order of authenticity that is locally enacted and translocally meaningful, both stimulate and rely on active semiotic design. It is in these facts that we begin to see an inception of ethnic consciousness in Enshi. In this sense, what we are also witnessing

is a contemporary process of ethnogenesis, that is, the invention of the Tujia and their heritage.

5 Conclusion

Meaning making in the global periphery is infused with complexity. To adequately address that complexity is one of the main challenges we are faced with in sociolinguistic studies. Through the case of the Tujia in Enshi, it is clear that any critical understanding about the complexity cannot disengage with the structural conditions of peripherality and inequality in which accessibility, communicability and validity of language resources and their use are embedded. For ethnic minorities such as the Tujia, heritage is a compelling identity discourse with historically loaded and regimented meanings and values. It came with the minority status that was 'given' by the state to people in Enshi, marking out their (invented) cultural alterity and geopolitical peripherality. Therefore, what their 'own' heritage invokes is not only an unfamiliar (sometimes absent) set of semiotic norms and resources, but also the perpetual ambivalence of (in)authenticity.

This ambivalence re-emerges through heritage tourism as the Tujia engage in processes of globalization. Heritage tourism opens for Enshi an opportunity to commodify their peripherality — which has now become a resource — while addressing the issue of authenticity. By incorporating the notion of chronotope, we are able to ethnographically contextualize and dissect the local identity acts demanded by heritage tourism, but performed simultaneously at multiple scale-levels. It transpires that these acts entail careful semiotization of time-space in which authenticity is communicated in a spatially and temporally reorganized, rerationalised order. In this new order of authenticity, the Tujia are able to design and deliver what may be considered authentic for different audiences while gaining economic and political purchase. They are heritaging in ways that, previously were mainly meaningful to others, but now are also meaningful for themselves. In this sense, they are *becoming* Tujia, and their heritaging is 'producing authenticity' (Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014).

Furthermore, heritage in a globalizing era is better understood as something chronotopically niched. The assumption of heritage as a singular chronotope of 'timeless-here' (in crystallized forms of language, clothing and other cultural traits) can no longer sufficiently explain what counts as authentic or inauthentic (see also Woolard 2013). The binary view is under challenge in an increasingly polycentric environment in which heritaging now operates. The authenticity claims it can make are not simply against the essentialised norm imposed from one centre, but through a complex process that involves semiotic manoeuvring targeting recognizability for multiple centres and scales. Through chronotopic manoeuvring, 'fake' acts (which are often produced for those who consider them as such), such as stage performing, designing and commodification, are able to find their own place and validity in heritaging, making themselves

a coherent and sustainable part of a co-constructed lifeworld. In this way, heritage is renewed, revised and reinserted in contemporary life — as part of the ongoing 'invention of tradition' in human society (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983).

This, to some extent, makes authenticity a politically more viable course for those in the periphery. As shown in the case of the Tujia, through their agency, peripheral groups are able to — even if symbolically — reclaim authenticity over certain ground, thus, a degree of autonomy over their own identity making. In minute semiotic details of performing heritage, we detect that the centre-periphery relation is being locally contested and reworked, from which cultural change is emerging. However, we must also avoid the over-generalization that those in the periphery are free from the structural inequality that circumscribes their authenticity. As our study suggests, the production of a new order of authenticity is still largely situated in a peripheral cultural and political economy, based on patterns and resources defined by the centre. Its own authenticity, therefore, has not escaped 'the cunning of recognition' (Povinelli 2002) within globalization.

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CONCLUSION

The nexus of power

The central research question guiding the work in this book was: *Do global infrastructures (new technologies and heritage tourism) create specific affordances in the margins of China?* I situated these affordances in the broad domain of identity-making. The answer to this question is undoubtedly 'yes', but with further qualifications.

I hope to have convincingly argued, through the chapters of this book, that identity-making in China's margins involves a wide range of issues and demands consideration of a multitude of forces. People perform their identity work 'poietically', of course, but in social environments characterized by 'infrastructural' forces that can steer their identity work in certain directions and prevent or render difficult access to other directions. This does not prevent extensive critical identity practices from occurring, as we have seen in the chapters on the rappers and the 'diaosi' members. Multiple competing identity scripts appear to be available and individuals such as the Enshi-based rapper Zeng Kun (discussed in Chapter 2) skilfully navigated them. This gels with the observation made by Paja Faudree (2015: 184) in a study of debates on orthographic 'authenticity' for indigenous languages in Mexico:

> studying authenticities requires attention not just to the plural form that authenticities take but also to what social work is accomplished by that multiplicity. (...) the conflict between different forms of authenticity can be productive.

In her study, Faudree distinguishes between two broad categories of authenticities in the debates she examined: orthodox authenticities and alternative authenticities (Faudree 2015: 196; also Wilce and Fenigsen 2015), and like in my own study, we see a polycentric pattern here. In the chapters presented earlier, I have highlighted the alternative forms of identity making, and I underscored the creative and productive aspects of such alternative forms of identity work.

There is a danger, however, that this emphasis on creativity and production of alternative modes of identity (the 'poietic' side of it), slips into 'postmodern' imaginations of fluidity and celebrations of diversity *per se*, where cultural forms are seen or esteemed to be legitimate because of the simple fact that they exist. We then get a view of polycentricity as a juxtaposition of cultural forms of equal value, and this view (however desirable in an ideal world) does not correspond to the observed facts. This is why I have strongly emphasized the 'infrastructural' dimension of these processes in my study. There are indeed multiple forms of identity and authenticity,

but they do not appear in a power vacuum and do not, consequently, have equivalent values in the real social world. Faudree's distinction between orthodox and alternative versions of authenticity already implies a hierarchy, in which orthodox forms are attributed greater legitimacy than alternative ones. This, I have suggested at various places, is precisely what turns particular forms of identity work into 'marginal' forms: the fact that they operate outside of and/or against orthodox ones, and risk sanctions because of it.

The argument I built in the various chapters, however, was intended to add an additional dimension to this picture: the dimension of globalization and, more particularly, the availability of two global infrastructural features: the internet and global templates for heritage tourism. This, as I have tried to argue, makes the processes observed more complex, because both infrastructural features offer specific affordances and, in that sense, have the potential to reshape and complicate the field of inequality observed by Faudree within the contours of the national level in Mexico. These infrastructures have shaped new conditions for what Faudree called the 'social work accomplished by that multiplicity'. I now review my findings in this regard.

In each chapter of this book, practices of identity-making in the margins illustrated were only possible because of the availability of specific global infrastructures. It is, for instance, difficult to imagine how Zeng Kun, working from his small room in Enshi, would have found an audience for his art other than through the internet. It is even more difficult to imagine how he would ever have got into hip-hop, if not for the global flows of popular culture that brought (originally US-based) music genres such as hip-hop into China and circulated it largely online. It is equally difficult to imagine ways in which the 'diaosi' members discussed in Chapter 6 could have achieved the cultural intimacy characterizing their community in a world only allowing offline congregation (which may also be problematic in the Chinese context). And the formats of global heritage tourism, as shown in Chapter 7, 8 and 9, are indispensable for the Tujia cultural entrepreneurs attempting to cut out a market segment for their authenticity.

Seen from this angle, the global infrastructures I considered in this book are instruments of social and cultural change, they are productive, enabling entirely new forms of social and cultural practices to be performed and to take root, and enabling the construction of new kinds of identities and communities in China's margins, called (following Maly and Varis 2015) translocal micro-populations. In fact, in many ways they can be said to be the determining factors in the very construction of these margins as complexes of (even if superficially) organized collective phenomena. The infrastructural affordances I discussed in this book all directly account for the very existence of the different forms of 'marginal' identities analysed here.

That said, I have emphasized throughout the analyses in this book how such affordances come with a range of compelling norms and constraints, generated by different 'centres' at various scale-levels. Polycentricity is hierarchical. Adequate identity work derives its value from adherence to several sets of norms simultaneously

enacted in complex semiotic practices. I can again refer to the discussion of the rappers' intricate forms of languaging, and the equally intricate forms of 'authenticity design' by members of the Tujia community in Enshi, as illustrations of this. There are the norms of the community (or communities) addressed in communication: the registers and genres that are considered and styled to meet the requirements of particular forms of identities. Such norms, and the resources required for satisfying them, need to be acquired, learned and practiced, and in the cases discussed in this book, the sources of such norms were translocal (even the Tujia were eager to draw on the examples from neighbouring ethnic minorities and even global formats in designing their own cultural attributes). There are the norms of creative practice, in which simple imitation needs to be replaced and extended by a well-measured calibration of established and new features (like in the case of the rappers). And, importantly in my study, there are the norms of the state, vigorously policed, that may threaten the success of specific forms of identity work (as that of the 'diaosi') when it is perceived to violate the rules of acceptable social and public behaviour. I used the (somewhat paradoxical) term 'forced creativity' to denote the ways in which people in the margins need to address and contend with those state norms.

The fact that precisely these state norms play such a prominent role in the stories demonstrates how the margins of China are constituted. Margins are defined in contradistinction to centres. In China, one particularly powerful centre, that of the state, monitors and polices the crucial infrastructures by means of which people can establish new identities and communities. It is the influence of that particular scale level that produces the specific forms of semiotic work we observed as acts of marginal identity. In order to construct such identities and connect them to emerging translocal communities, one must keep an eye on how the state judges such practices and on how the state delimits their scope of distribution, and given the potentially transgressive nature of the practices, they must be continuously adjusted to that. This makes them identity-constructing practices in the margins, but not beyond the margins: they are meticulously kept within the strict (and not always clearly predictable) boundaries of what the state may expect or tolerate. The notion of China's margins, therefore, is very much an effect of infrastructures on poiesis. An analysis focused exclusively on the momentary articulation of identities could not have shown them to be marginal. Their relative social, cultural and political positions emerge from an ethnography in which poiesis and infrastructure are jointly considered and in which the latter is examined as a condition for the former, an affordance enabling certain forms of action, but also a constraint preventing and regulating affordances. The nexus of both is a nexus of power.

This power, I must underscore, is not 'spectacular'. It is power as imagined by Foucault (1977), stretched and dispersed over a vast field of small and big features, an 'infrapolitics' as I called it (borrowing from Scott 1990) with respect to the 'diaosi' members, operating on tiny semiotic features of great indexical value: sounds, words, particular scripted forms, memes, varieties of language, contents, clothing

and embodied performance. To the extent that the globalized infrastructures create new affordances in terms of community-formation and scope of distribution, they also come with new traps and pitfalls: what looks small and ordinary to members of translocal micro-populations can be seen as big and disruptive by state censors, and an awareness of the perpetual presence of the latter motivates some of the extremely creative semiotic work performed by the subjects in this book.

It is, indeed, 'forced creativity', and bound to be unending in terms of productivity. There is no limit to the ways in which the margins will be semiotically constructed and reconstructed, in continuously changing interactions with the 'centres' they have to orient to, for, as we have seen here, there is no limit to the potential to reconfigure available semiotic material. Every shift in infrastructure will generate new forms of poiesis, which will in turn occasion new infrastructural shifts. New affordances will continuously have to be balanced against new constraints, and new ways and means will have to be found to make the most of the space of creativity thus shaped. In that sense, this book can merely scratch the surface and point in the direction of what will come, as a snapshot of a process of continuous margin-creation, which will continue to develop, I expect, along some of the parameters and dimensions sketched in the chapters here.

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SUMMARY

Online and Offline Margins in China: Globalization, Language and Identity

The margins, as much as the centres of the world system, are transforming while being transformed by processes of globalization. However, places far removed from metropolitan and urban centres, with unequal access to global infrastructures, and marginal identity making therein, are notably less absorbed into the current scholarship on language and globalization. In view of the possible urban bias, this book engages with contemporary China as a case in point and considers the extent to which new infrastructures create specific affordances in the margins of China. Focusing on the new internet technology and the new economy of heritage tourism as two such infrastructures, the chapters of this book adopt varied sociolinguistic foci and instruments for exploring China's culturally and linguistically disenfranchised groups and individuals on multiple sites. These range from hip-hop and subculture, digital media and communication, linguistic landscapes, dialect and minority language, social semiotization and language commodification, to ethnicity and heritage tourism. The different cases discussed in the book jointly present an ethnographically informed illustration and interpretation of the margins as well as the articulation of marginal identities, both online and offline, emerging from a Chinese context.

The introductory chapter of the book maps out the theoretical, methodological and empirical approach in broad terms by drawing on the 'poiesis-infrastructure nexus' metaphor, that is, the moment in which human situated creativity ('poiesis') is deployed in relation to specific larger-scale 'infrastructural' conditions. This points to considerable challenges in describing the different forms of online and offline semiotic creativity because, on the one hand, we are faced with contemporary complexities of the local-global interface in such identity work; on the other hand, we are faced with globalization in China as a complex context in which China remains a margin in the world of the internet while it also has its own geopolitical and sociocultural margins. In view of these challenges, this chapter outlines both the emerging paradigm of the sociolinguistic globalization and that of (multi-sited) ethnography for approaching complexity in globalization in a socially realistic, open and flexible way.

Chapter 1 makes an all-encompassing argument for the study of the margins in sociolinguistic globalization. In tackling the 'urban bias' in current scholarship on language and globalization, the chapter pleads for attention to margins in analysing globalization processes and their sociolinguistic implications. Taking examples from new media and communication technologies, from new forms of economic activity, and from the perspective of legitimacy in the contentious struggle between com-

modification of language and the semiotic construction of authenticity, this chapter proposes to develop an ethnographically sensitive approach to the specific, often partial levels of access to infrastructures that characterize the margins of the world system.

Chapter 2 presents the case of the online rapper Zeng Kun in Enshi, who can be considered as someone absolutely marginal in multiple senses of the word, yet has access to opportunities provided by the internet. This chapter also locates our gaze onto Enshi, a remote, rural minority region in Central China that is marked with linguistic and cultural marginality. This is the starting point of our ethnographic journey, which offers a detailed examination of the kind of online hip-hop languaging produced by way of mixing specific features of the dialect Enshi Fangyan with the standard Chinese Putonghua and English. In understanding the context and the orders of authenticity in Zeng Kun's hip-hop art, this chapter also surveys critically the sociolinguistic ideologies and practices surrounding the three aforementioned types of linguistic resources in China today.

Chapter 3 brings our investigation to Zeng Kun's counterpart Liangliang – who is situated in Beijing as a centre while in the margins of the global hip-hop and Chinese public cultures – and the features in his articulation of hip-hop authenticity. The focus of this chapter is on the multilayered and polycentric nature of internet hip-hop in the form self-, peer- and state-imposed norms. It argues that the internet is a superdiverse as well as normative space where diversity is controlled, ordered and curtails, and new forms of meaning making are accompanied with new systems of normativity.

Chapter 4 zooms out of the two cases of 'poiesis' in Chapter 2 and 3 and discusses in general terms the Chinese internet as an emerging infrastructure, which offers both opportunities and constraints to identity making. It is further emphasized in this chapter that the rise of the internet has both positive and negative aspects: while the internet technology affords new sociolinguistic patterns and practices, expanding, altering or developing identity repertoires, it also imposes constrains on such forms of creativity.

Chapter 5 extends the discussion on internet infrastructure by considering the state ideology of 'harmony' and its intriguing and poietic subcultural uptakes by dissident Chinese netizens, which are, paradoxically, afforded by the internet. From the perspective of language policy, this chapter discusses the politics of harmony through a descriptive analysis of the field of internet memes surrounding 'harmony', which feed back into offline popular and critical culture. It points at the increasingly polycentric realities clashing with the modernist mono centric ideal of harmony, with arguments for an ethnographically based understanding and inspection of language policy as an instrument for shaping sociolinguistic life.

Chapter 6 considers more closely a collective marginal voice of Chinese netizens expressed through 'diaosi', a vulgar word referring to pubic hair, and spun off by the internet in reaction to overt online politics and benign online entertainment, and

how the online *and* offline cultural and identity poiesis influence and intertwine with each other. The infrapolitics of diaosi illustrates (echoing Chapter 3) a supergroup generated by the internet, which can be understood in terms of a collective identity-making that seeks to create critical social solidarity and a practice and politics of cultural intimacy.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 continue with the inquiry about collective marginal identity, but moving from subculture back to the (offline) space of Enshi where the research journey began, and that inquiry now turns towards globalization processes as experienced by the ethnic minority community of the Tujia (of which Zeng Kun the rapper is a member), and towards heritage tourism as a distinctive infrastructure. Chapter 7 combines Zeng Kun's story with that of the design of an 'authentic' Tujia costume emerging from Enshi's heritage tourism and shows that, in both cases, online as well as offline, authenticity is a salient imperative of identity making that involves strategic, complex processes of semiotic manoeuvring that orients towards multi-scalar, polycentric systems of norms. In so doing the chapter provokes the argument for semiotic design as 'inauthentic authenticity' — semiotic innovation and transformation for translocal mobility.

Chapter 8 examines specifically the designing process on Enshi's linguistic landscape for commodifying the Tujia heritage. The issue at hand here is the challenge of writing Chinese, specifically, the innovate way of writing the local dialect of Enshi fangyan and the severely endangered Tujia language in a local tourist resort for the sake of the commodification of heritage and locality. Borrowing the term the 'tyranny of writing', this chapter contrasts the overt creativity in writing fangyan with distinct forms of 'tyranny' in play: that of the centralized language policy of standard Chinese that marginalizes non-standard varieties, and that of heritage-based 'authenticity'.

In Chapter 9, the concept of 'chronotope' is applied to examine the ways in which the Tujia in Enshi engage with the local production of 'authentic' heritage for tourism. This leads to historical grounding of the Tujia in China's nation-building and state politics of multiculturalism, which uncovers the anxiety of inauthenticity experienced by the group with their own minority status and cultural heritage, as well as their strategic chronotopic incorporation of both 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' aspects of local identity practices into a new order of authenticity. This understanding moves our analysis away from the essentialised binary view on authenticity versus inauthenticity, and offers a more realistic and emic perspective to the situated, contingent nature of organizing both aspects into one coherent identity project.

In the final chapter, the discussions zoom out onto the dynamics and complexity of the poiesis-infrastructure nexus in identity making in China's margins. While marginal identities may point us towards considerable creativity and diversity, as shown in the various cases presented in this book, their operations are dependent on and largely defined by the online and offline infrastructures of globalization. What these infrastructures afford are increasingly polycentric and multi-scalar environments in

which, even though people in the margins may gain a degree of mobility by reaching out to the supergroups or translocal micro-populations, the processes are heavily mediated by a myriad of norms and, in the case of China, notably policed by the state. The book closes with an analogy to the Foucauldian notion of power, and argues that the poiesis-infrastructure nexus is a nexus of power, which provides a perpetual drive for the semiotic production and reproduction of identities for those in the margins.

Tilburg Dissertations in Culture Studies

This list includes the doctoral dissertations that through their authors and/or supervisors are related to the Department of Culture Studies at the Tilburg University School of Humanities. The dissertations cover the broad field of contemporary sociocultural change in domains such as language and communication, performing arts, social and spiritual ritualization, media and politics.

1 Sander Bax. *De taak van de schrijver. Het poëticale debat in de Nederlandse literatuur (1968-1985)*. Supervisors: Jaap Goedegebuure and Odile Heynders, 23 May 2007.

2 Tamara van Schilt-Mol. *Differential item functioning en itembias in de cito-eindtoets basisonderwijs. Oorzaken van onbedoelde moeilijkheden in toetsopgaven voor leerlingen van Turkse en Marokkaanse afkomst*. Supervisors: Ton Vallen and Henny Uiterwijk, 20 June 2007.

3 Mustafa Güleç. *Differences in similarities: A comparative study on Turkish language achievement and proficiency in a Dutch migration context*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Kutlay Yağmur, 25 June 2007.

4 Massimiliano Spotti. *Developing identities: Identity construction in multicultural primary classrooms in the Netherlands and Flanders*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon and Guus Extra, 23 November 2007.

5 A. Seza Doğruöz. *Synchronic variation and diachronic change in Dutch Turkish: A corpus based analysis*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Ad Backus, 12 December 2007.

6 Daan van Bel. *Het verklaren van leesgedrag met een impliciete attitudemeting*. Supervisors: Hugo Verdaasdonk, Helma van Lierop and Mia Stokmans, 28 March 2008.

7 Sharda Roelsma-Somer. *De kwaliteit van Hindoescholen*. Supervisors: Ruben Gowricharn and Sjaak Braster, 17 September 2008.

8 Yonas Mesfun Asfaha. *Literacy acquisition in multilingual Eritrea: A comparative study of reading across languages and scripts*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon and Jeanne Kurvers, 4 November 2009.

9 Dong Jie. *The making of migrant identities in Beijing: Scale, discourse, and diversity*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert and Sjaak Kroon, 4 November 2009.

10 Elma Nap-Kolhoff. *Second Language Acquisition in early childhood: A longitudinal multiple case study of Turkish-Dutch children*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Kutlay Yağmur, 12 May 2010.

11 Maria Mos. *Complex lexical items*. Supervisors: Antal van den Bosch, Ad Backus and Anne Vermeer, 12 May 2010.

12 António da Graça. *Etnische zelforganisaties in het integratieproces. Een case study in de Kaapverdische gemeenschap in Rotterdam*. Supervisor: Ruben Gowricharn, 8 October 2010.

13 Kasper Juffermans. *Local languaging: Literacy products and practices in Gambian society*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert and Sjaak Kroon, 13 October 2010.

14 Marja van Knippenberg. *Nederlands in het Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs. Een casestudy in de opleiding Helpende Zorg*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon, Ton Vallen and Jeanne Kurvers, 14 December 2010.

15 Coosje van der Pol. *Prentenboeken lezen* als literatuur. *Een structuralistische benadering van het concept 'literaire competentie' voor kleuters*. Supervisor: Helma van Lierop, 17 December 2010.

16 Nadia Eversteijn-Kluijtmans. *"All at once" – Language choice and codeswitching by Turkish-Dutch teenagers*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Ad Backus, 14 January 2011.

17 Mohammadi Laghzaoui. *Emergent academic language at home and at school. A longitudinal study of 3- to 6-year-old Moroccan Berber children in the Netherlands*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon, Ton Vallen, Abderrahman El Aissati and Jeanne Kurvers, 9 September 2011.

18 Sinan Çankaya. *Buiten veiliger dan binnen: in- en uitsluiting van etnische minderheden binnen de politieorganisatie*. Supervisors: Ruben Gowricharn and Frank Bovenkerk, 24 October 2011.

19 Femke Nijland. *Mirroring interaction. An exploratory study into student interaction in independent working*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon, Sanneke Bolhuis, Piet-Hein van de Ven and Olav Severijnen, 20 December 2011.

20 Youssef Boutachekourt. *Exploring cultural diversity. Concurrentievoordelen uit multiculturele strategieën*. Supervisors: Ruben Gowricharn and Slawek Magala, 14 March 2012.

21 Jef Van der Aa. *Ethnographic monitoring. Language, narrative and voice in a Carribbean classroom*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert and Sjaak Kroon, 8 June 2012.

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